First in Fiction

Everybody's
MAGAZINE

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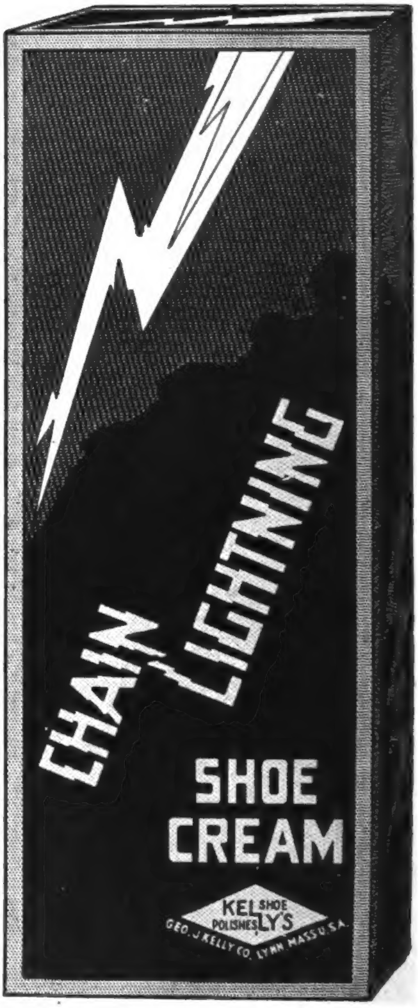
'HE PHANTOM AUTO'' Introducin

Pretty Feet Ugly Feet

Often a Matter of Shoe Polish



Expensive shoes and poor shoe polish in a short time produce shabby-looking feet.

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Everybody's

NUMBER SIX DECEMBER, 1921 VOLUME XLV

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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EVERYBODY'S takes all reasonable precautions for handling manuscripts submitted, but assumes no responsibility for their safety.
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Note — The editor regrets that owing to limitations of space it has not been found possible to include Mr. Bullock's story, "Hearts and Fists," in the contents of this issue, as announced last month. It will appear, however, in an early number.

January Forecast

THE BRIDGE *A Complete Novel* By Marjorie L. C. Pickthall
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TEST-TUBE NECROMANCY By Stoddard Goodhue
Science Solves a Strange Crime

THE DESERT DECIDES By William Ashley Anderson
Love and Adventure in an Odd Setting

THAT LOVELY BOUNDER By Walter De Leon
A Blend of Humor and Mystery

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of Everybody's Magazine, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1921. State of New York. County of New York, ss. Before me a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared James F. Birmingham, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Everybody's Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher: The Ridgway Company, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Editor, Sewell Haggard, 223 Spring Street, New York City. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, James F. Birmingham, 223 Spring Street, New York City. 2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.) *Owner:* The Ridgway Company, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. *Stockholders:* Federal Publishing Company, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J. Stockholder of Federal Publishing Company: The Butterick Company, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Stockholders of Butterick Company: George B. Black, 812 Lincoln Avenue, Mendota, Ill. John M. Donington, 37 Wall Street, New York City. W. H. Gelshenen, 100 William Street, New York City. Gude, Wimill & Company, 20 Broad Street, New York City. S. R. Latshaw, Butterick Building, New York City. H. G. Millard, 132 East 10th Street, New York City. Laura J. O'Loughlin, 156 Ridge Street, Glens Falls, N. Y. Mrs. Arethusa Pond, San Remo Hotel, New York City. Erman J. Ridgway, 280 Broadway, New York City. R. A. Van Wyck, 149 Broadway, New York City. G. W. Wilder, Butterick Building, New York City. Ben F. Wilder, Butterick Building, New York City. H. N. Whitney & Sons, 15 Broad Street, New York City. Belle H. M. Hooper, Jane S. Morse, Everett Masten, Horace F. Poor, Trustees, Estate of Harry F. Morse, deceased, care of Garfield Nat'l Bank, New York City. 3. *That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)* None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is. (This information is required from daily publications only.) James F. Birmingham, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1921. Cecil L. Wahl, Notary Public, Kings County No. 99; Kings County Register No. 2087; N. Y. County Clerk No. 236, Register No. 219. (*My commission expires March* 30, 1922.) (Seal.) Form 3526.—Ed. 1916.

The Next New Serial

In January

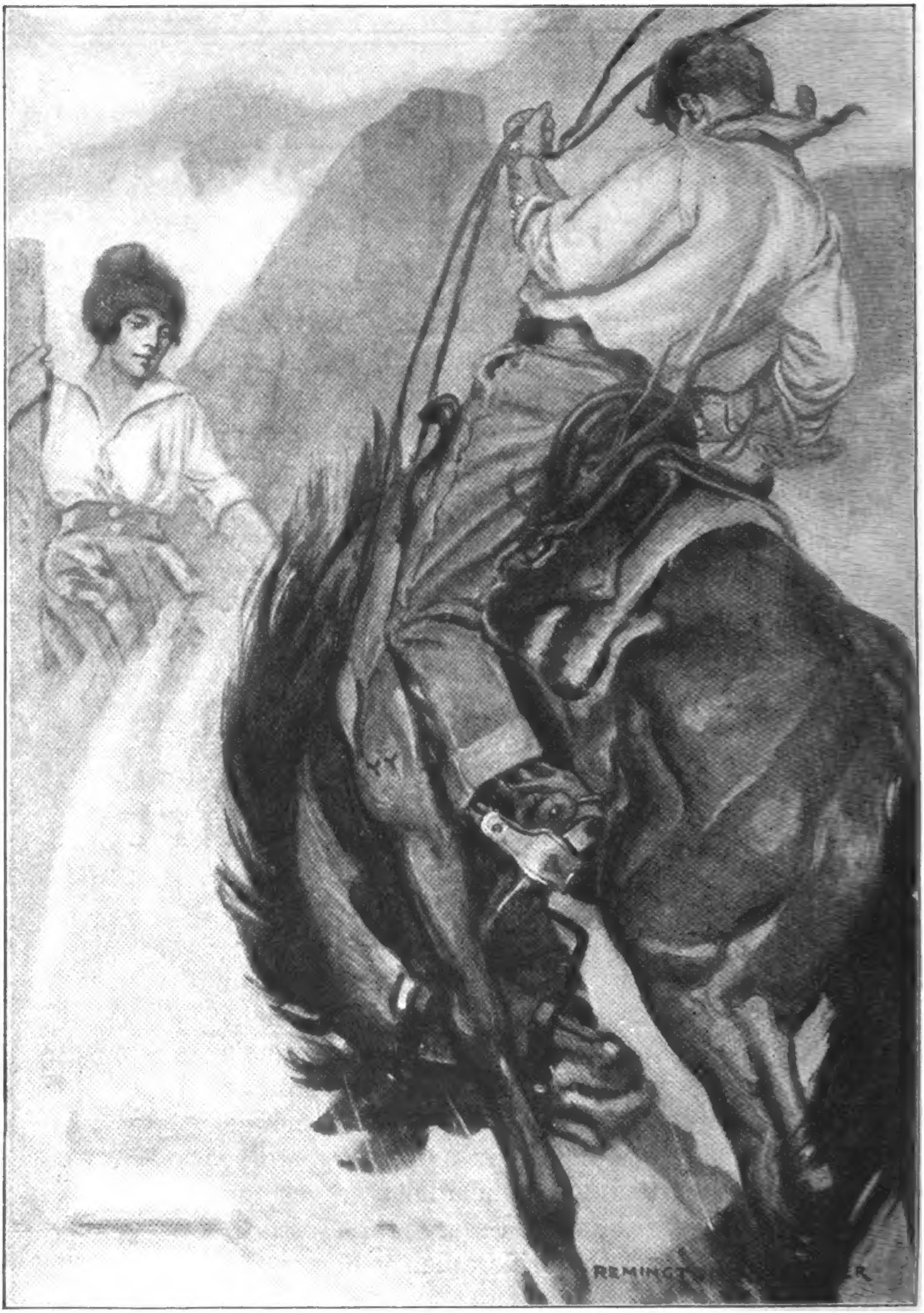
THE purpose of a mystery story is to take the reader suddenly out of the humdrum present, fling him into a make-believe world, and keep him there—baffled, yearning to know the end—until the very last sentence on the very last page. A mystery story or a mystery play is harmless relaxation for the mind that spends its working-hours upon more serious business. Such a story is

The Mystery *of* Ravensdene Court

By J. S. Fletcher

THE story begins with Salter Quick in search of a graveyard, "or it might be two, or it might be three, where there's gravestones what bears a name—name of Netherfield." That's a mysterious enough beginning for a mystery story. The search for a name upon a gravestone is the beginning of a search for a fortune, and there are thrills aplenty before the treasure is found.

January *Everybody's*—out December 15th



Suddenly, and without touching the stirrups, John was in the saddle. The mare quivered, and the great muscles of her shoulders knotted. Then, with a wild squeal, she bucked, and the battle was on.

Breaking the Blue Roan

A Short-Story Gem in a Western Setting—The Search of a Man for Beauty, and How and Where He Found It

By Honoré Willsie

Author of "Desert Justice," "Find the Maverick," etc.

Illustrations by Remington Schuyler

JOHN HARDY was born in Montana. But he did not grow up to be a sheepman, after all, because when John was a baby his father homesteaded in Wyoming. The homestead prospered, and when Bill Hardy died he left John five thousand head of Herefords and a hundred or so of range-horses. John was twenty-five when he inherited. At thirty-five, he still was unmarried, a man of magnificent physique, best known for his taciturnity, his slowness and his superb horsemanship.

In spite of his many acres and his herds, John was not popular with the women of Lost Trail. Some of them said he was too lazy to make love. Some of them said that a man who was soft with horses, like John, never made a successful lover; others that John was too stupid to find a wife. All of which merely goes to prove that Lost Trail women were poor judges of men.

Quite unknown to the rest of the valley, John was in love; deeply, passionately in love, and had been ever since the new schoolma'am had come to the log schoolhouse on the mountainside. Not that Edith Archer, the schoolma'am, guessed this fact. She would probably have said that one of the Lost Trail girls bred to the saddle and to the bitter hard work of the ranch would be John's choice. At least, she would have said this the first few months of her stay in Lost Trail. What she really said later is a part of this story.

Edith Archer was slender and gray-eyed, with masses of chestnut hair wrapped round a finely shaped head. Her eyes and mouth were very beautiful, the eyes large, deep-set and grave, the mouth richly curved and wistful. She was low-voiced, an anomaly in Lost Trail, where women spoke shrilly and men spoke softly. She arrived at Lost Trail in September. By May, the seven thousand feet of elevation at which the valley was set ceased to make her pant at the slightest exertion. She could stick on a well-broken horse, and she had tooled the Lost Trail school along at a pace unprecedented in the annals of that happy-go-lucky assemblage.

By May, most of the eligible young riders of Lost Trail had offered themselves to Edith and had been refused. All but John Hardy and Dick Holton. Neither of these had proposed to the schoolma'am; John, because he did not want to add the pain of a refusal to his general sense of unfitness; Dick, because, for all that he was in love with Edith, he had plans afoot that did not harmonize with marriage. Edith herself looked on marriage as bondage which she had not the slightest desire to enter.

As John was loping past the schoolhouse, late one May afternoon, Edith hailed him.

"Oh, Mr. Hardy! Would you mind calling for my mail, too?"

John waved his hat and put his spurs to Nelly, who broke into a gallop and arrived at the post-office in a sweating lather. A group of riders around the empty stove greeted him noisily. He grinned without losing the quiet dignity habitual to his blue eyes, and said to the postmaster,

"Give me Miss Archer's mail, too, Pete."

"How'd you get on that job, John?" demanded Pink Marshall. "I thought Dick, here, was on duty. Did you get yours, Dick? Say; I've done formed an ex-Archer club. Come on in, Dick, and Johnny, you'd better qualify!"

Dick, a good-looking man, dark and a little heavy around the jaw, laughed with the rest. "I ain't eligible yet, Pink. You go on with the mail, John. Maybe she likes elephants!"

"I don't know but what you'd better let me take her her letters, Pete," Pink went on. "A guy like John that's too lazy to court Edith Archer ain't got any love in him. And I still like to look at her, even if she don't want me."

"As for me," grunted Art Brown, "I like to listen to her. She's the only woman in the valley that don't bleat every time she opens her mouth."

One of the older men, Hank Lawson, spoke. "I'm going to make a try at breaking the blue roan mare to-morrow. Better come up, John."

"Handsomest horse in the valley! I wish you'd sell her to me, Hank," said John.

Hank shook his head. "Anybody in Lost Trail that hasn't offered to buy the blue roan from you, Lawson?" asked Pete.

"Everybody's on record but Dick," replied the rancher.

Pete laughed. "Well, some folks has a prejudice against paying money for horseflesh."

There was an awkward pause. Dick had had some narrow escapes from the sheriff, but few people had the temerity to taunt him about it.

Pink came to the rescue. "You'd ought to form an ex-blue-roan club, Hank!"

John laughed, lifted Pink by the collar and the slack of his breeches and laid him across the empty stove, then went out.

EDITH was sitting on the log door-step of the schoolhouse when John brought Nelly to her haunches before her.

Edith laughed. "Were you ever allowed to gallop alone on the enemy when you were in France, Mr. Hardy?"

"I was put into the infantry," replied John, with a smile.

"They didn't want you to scare the Germans to death, of course."

John's bigness was of bone and sinew. He jumped from the saddle without touching the stirrups, pulled off his hat and handed Edith her mail. She looked up at him, still smiling.

"Little Charley Banes is watering my horse for me. Will you rest a bit, or must you go on?"

John pulled the reins over Nelly's head and sat down on the log beside the schoolma'am, who did not open her letters but sat waiting for the big rider to speak. Her eyes swept the powerful lines beneath the chaps and the soft silk shirt, then paused on the stern modeling of the mouth and chin.

Still John did not speak. His eyes lifted from the green-budding alfalfa in the valley to the menacing black saw edge of the Dead Fire range.

"Well," said Edith at last, "I hate to leave it all."

"When do you go?" asked the rider.

"I thought I'd wait for the Fourth of July rodeo," she said. "Shall you ride?"

John nodded.

"Mr. Lawson said he was going to ask you to come up to help him with the blue roan to-morrow." Edith looked at John inquiringly.

"Yes; I'll be up there, I guess."

"It must be a wonderful thing to have the skill with horses that you have," sighed the schoolma'am.

"You wouldn't think so if you'd been brought up in Lost Trail, and if you'd been brought up in Lost Trail, you'd have been spoiled."

"Spoiled! My word, man, what was there to spoil? If I'd been bred in this valley, I might have been wild and full of fight like the blue roan, but I'd have been really worth while. As it is, I'm just a soft Easterner."

"The blue roan wasn't bred in this valley. She's a wild horse Hank roped up in the Many Eagles a while back. And I can't see how any one would want to be bred in this rough, God-forsaken spot."

"Don't you like it?"

"Of course! But I'm rough and God-forsaken like the country. Nobody like you could put up with it very long."

The schoolma'am stared at the rancher curiously.

"Sometimes," John went on in his low-voiced drawl, "I get tired of it."

"What could you desire more than you have?" asked the schoolma'am.

"Well, even a rider likes something that's beautiful and fine in his life once in a while. The older I grow the more I realize that the folks that marry just on cattle—and like cattle—don't know anything at all about what there might be in love. There might be something that these Lost Trail folks don't realize exists, you know."

If Edith felt surprise, she did not show it. For long months she had tried to tempt John Hardy to share with her what thoughts lay behind the rugged dignity of his quiet face, and she was not going to stop the unexpected confidence by any show of amazement.

She nodded her head. "There should be the same beauty in love here that there is in the ranges yonder, just as subtle and just as enduring. But one would never expect to find it here—or anywhere else——"

John drew a deep breath. But before he could speak, small Charley appeared with a little bay horse.

"Shall I help you on?" asked John.

"If you don't mind," replied Edith.

But John did not offer his knee. Instead, he stepped up on the log, put his great hands around Edith's waist and swung her to the saddle as if she were a child.

"Shucks!" cried Charley. "You don't have to do that. She can get on as well as anybody."

"That will do, Charles!" said Edith. "You may go now. We'll see you at the ranch to-morrow, then, Mr. Hardy?"

"Yes; I'll be along." John mounted and turned Nelly's head up the mountain. At the turn of the trail he looked back. Edith was still before the schoolhouse door. She waved her hand and John waved back, then rode on with an expression of profound depression on his sunburned face.

Edith boarded with the Lawsons at the north end of the valley. Their ranch of a thousand acres straddled Lost Trail Creek, which tumbled like a liquid green opal past the corrals and down the alfalfa fields. The Lawsons' little log cabin was set in a grove of quivering aspens within easy access of the creek. There was no fence about the house, and cattle, horses, dogs, cats and chickens inhabited the very door-step amid a litter of saddles, harness, spurs, lariat ropes and nose-bags.

WHEN John Hardy rode up the next morning about eleven o'clock, two or three riders were sitting on the fence. Mrs. Lawson was established on the hay wagon and Edith was perched on the top bar of the corral gate, hugging the post. Hank Lawson was standing in the corral holding a blue-roan mare by a lariat round her neck. John dismounted and tied Nelly to the hay-rack.

"You're just in time, John!" cried Mame Lawson. "She's thrown the hull of 'em. She just dumped Dick and they had to rope her to keep her from climbing the fence."

John lighted a cigaret and threw his long legs over the fence beside the other riders.

"She's sure a bird!" panted Lawson. "But ain't she a beauty? Got some Hambletonian in her, and some Morgan, by her head."

"Gord, Hank, you'll be claiming Clydesdale for her yet, just because her mane's curly!" grunted Pink Lawson. "She's just the orneriest unbroke mare in Lost Trail, half Injun pony and the other half wildcat."

John, hunched on the topmost rail, looked from the panting horse to Edith and from Edith to the great white crest of Eagle's Peak which brooded with appalling intimacy over the Lawson ranch, then back to the mare. She was about fifteen hands high, a spotless blue roan in color, with the magnificent mane and tail that the open winter range produces. She had the round strong back and barrel so desirable in the mountains, small feet and the lean, wiry neck that spelled ancestry, real, if remote. She was panting, and her breast was foam-flecked.

"Hard to mount?" asked John.

"Easy as a bolt of lightning," said Pink. "Look at the she hellion with her tail and neck as limp as a rag doll! Wouldn't you think she was stuffed with sawdust? Go to it, John! I hold the record to date. I stayed with her just six minutes. Hank's going to enter her down at Cheyenne, Frontier day, as the Great Unbroke. I'd like to see one of those champeens tackle her."

John pulled off his coat and vest and dropped them across the fence. He drew his broad rider's belt tighter and adjusted his spurs, then put on his gloves again.

"Who saddled her?" he asked.

"All of us," replied Hank promptly. "Everything's O. K.—new cinch and hackamore. But I warn you, she's got the makings of a killer in her."

Edith cleared her throat. "What's the idea of breaking her, poor thing? I've a queer sort of sympathy for her. You have a hundred horses, Mr. Lawson."

Lawson looked from Edith's puzzled eyes to the row of grinning riders.

"Well, she's got to be broke, ain't she?"

"I don't see why. You've lots of horses you never break."

"Yes; but she's a beauty and she's got to be broke. Come on, John!"

John put his hand on the reins. The roan jerked her head high in the air. Lawson now shortened the lariat till he reached the animal's head, then, with the mare backing and plunging violently, he loosened the noose and slipped the rope.

"You get on the fence, Hank," ordered John, "and don't make any more noise than you naturally feel you have to."

JOHN had no quirt. With one hand gripping the reins firmly, he lighted another cigaret. As the match flared, the horse tried to rear and the man jumped aside to avoid her fore hoofs. Then he began to talk to her, now and again making a move as if to put his left hand, which held the reins, on the pommel. At each attempt, the mare lunged violently backward.

"So, beauty; so! Why worry? Life is always like this. Better be broke by a man than by a mountain-lion on the range. So! That's no way to act! So!"

Edith, sitting on the gate, tried not to miss a word of the monologue.

"Wait, beauty; wait! You don't know what you've been missing. The best fun in life for horse or man is the saddle. Calmly now! Nobody is going to hit you over the head while I'm around."

Ten minutes of this, and then Dick cried profanely: "Get onto the blankety-blank, John! What are you afraid of?"

Suddenly, and without touching the stirrups, John was in the saddle. The mare dropped her head. John established his feet quickly in the stirrups. She drew her legs together under her belly; her tail flattened between her hind legs and her ears lay back on her neck. She quivered, and the great muscles of her shoulders knotted. Then, with a wild squeal, she bucked, and the battle was on.

She bucked all the way around the fence, coming down each time with a crash of her right side into the rails in the vain attempt to crush Hardy's leg. She split his boot-leg, but if she hurt his leg, John gave no sign. When she had bucked so long that the spectators had lost track of the number of times she had circled the corral, she ceased her squealing and shot across the enclosure, straight for the gate.

"Get away, Miss Archer!" cried John.

The girl dropped without the gate just as the mare reared, jumped into the air and came down on her side. John was standing beside her as she lay for a moment, kicking, and as she rose, he was in the saddle. With unmitigated enthusiasm, the mare tore across the corral, again reared and again came down on her side. Edith clambered up beside Pink Marshall.

"Will she kill him?" she asked.

"Shucks! Nobody hardly ever gets killed by horses out in this country," he answered. "You've got to hand it to old John! Sixteen minutes, and she ain't budged him."

Edith drew a deep breath. Her eyes swept the glowing beauty of the ranges, then dropped back to the blue roan and the rider whose soft silk shirt was wet with sweat. Again and again the mare, her eyes mad with fear and anger, jumped for the sun and fell back to her side.

"Twenty-five minutes!" cried Lawson.

As if she suddenly realized that she ought to be weary, the mare paused in the middle of the corral, head drooped, legs straddled. John warily lighted a fresh cigaret, but the tense muscles under his wet shirt did not relax nor did his spurs drop from the bloody flanks. His hat long since had rolled under the fence and his damp yellow hair gleamed in the brilliant sunlight. No one spoke. For a full five minutes the roan stood quiescent; then, agile as a cat, she lay down and rolled. She enjoyed this pastime for several moments, evidently under the impression that she was crushing John into the muck of the corral. But when she regained her feet he was in the saddle, and once more she resumed the bucking. John's face now was drawn and white under the dripping sweat. Again and again the blue roan threw herself against the fence.

"Fifty-two minutes, and he ain't pulled leather yet," grunted Lawson. "But he might as well quit. I'll send her down to Cheyenne."

"Don't engage space quite yet!" exclaimed Pink. "Watch this!"

The panting horse again was standing in the middle of the corral. John lifted the reins high above her neck and drove the rowels home. The blue roan broke into a gentle trot and slowly circled the corral until John brought her to pause and carefully and painfully dismounted.

"He sure grips 'em!" exclaimed Lawson.

"You'll note that she's spur- and not quirt-broke," added Pink.

"I ain't seen nothing better, not even on Frontier day," cried Mame Lawson, "except when Annie Rice, the cow-girl, got killed!"

John walked over to the fence and looked up at Edith. She smiled a little unevenly.

"I'm glad you won," she said, "but I'm sorry for the blue roan."

John nodded. "I didn't hurt her. Not near as much as she hurt me. Maybe she'll live to thank me"—this with a smile that haunted Edith for many hours.

The other riders gathered about the hay-rack where Mrs. Lawson was dispensing coffee.

"I'd like to ride the blue roan," said Edith.

"You let her alone," John returned slowly, "till she's well broke. And I don't think Lawson can lady-break her. Maybe he'll let me do it for him."

"Riding makes me sleep," said Edith. "For a year before I came to Lost Trail, I hadn't had a real night's sleep."

"What was the trouble?"

"Too much teaching and other things."

"A man?" asked John slowly.

Edith smiled. "I've liked many men, but I certainly never would admit that one of them had given me insomnia. And I don't think I'd walk in my sleep or dream queer dreams if I had the skill and courage to fight with her every day."

"You let her alone!" repeated John. "Even if you have liked many men, that doesn't teach you to control a wild horse."

Again Edith gave him a quick, inscrutable little smile.

"Come and get some coffee."

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921

John returned the smile and followed her to the hay-rack.

"Well, Johnny," said Hank, "what are you going to charge me for breaking the beauty?"

"You mean you want me to take her home and get her in saddle-shape?"

"I sure don't! She's good enough for me to start with right now."

"You let me take her home and I'll lady-break her for you for nothing," said John.

"Who's that for, Hank or the school-ma'am?" demanded Dick.

"Both," replied John coolly.

"Don't you do it, Hank," said Dick. "It would be a shame to have a mare like that lady-broke. And don't you think that John's taken the freedom out of her."

The others turned to follow Dick's gaze. The blue roan was standing on the far side of the corral, her head resting on the top bar of the gate. There was something dejected in the droop of the beautiful blue-brown body, something unquenchably spirited in the lift of the head toward the eternal hills. Edith looked from the blue roan to John and from John to Dick.

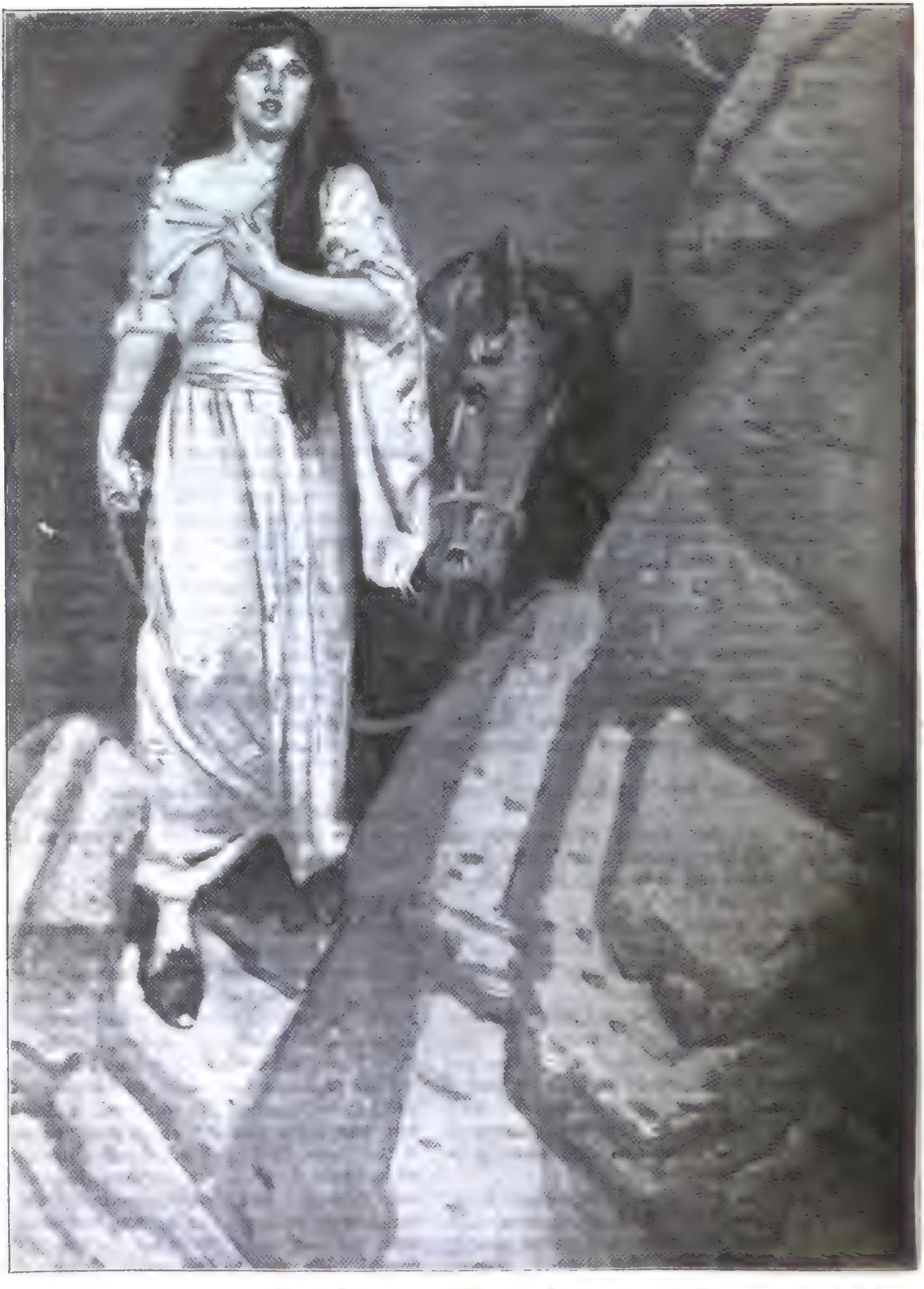
"I got a good horse that's lady-broke that I'd admire to give you, Miss Archer," said Dick suddenly.

"No, thanks!" exclaimed Edith laughingly. "The blue roan or nothing!"

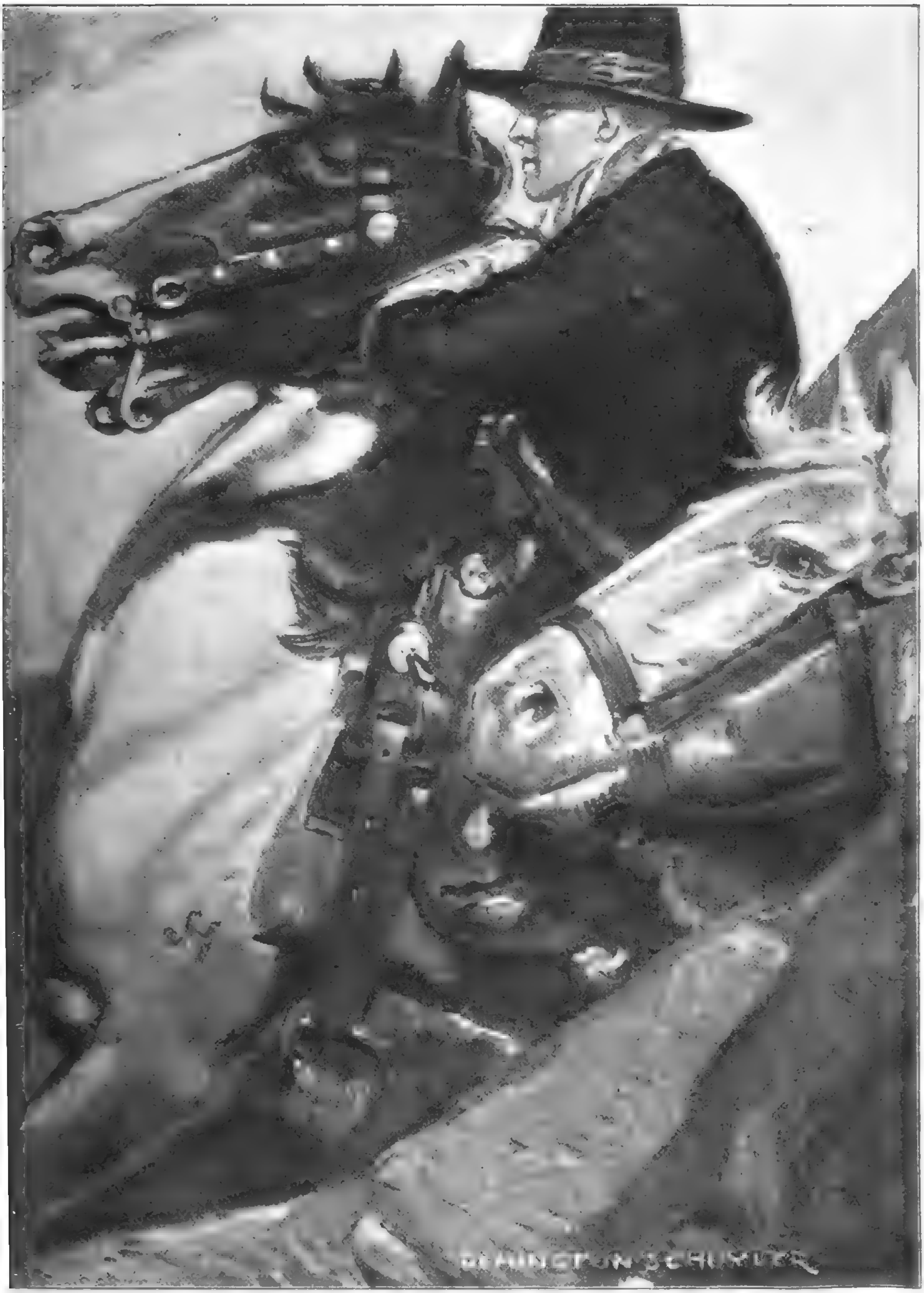
"Aw; she'll be running away the first chance she gets!" retorted Dick. "Me, I hope she does!" And he strode over to his dapple-gray and trotted off.

THERE was a glorious moon that night. John could not sleep. All the long hours till midnight he lay tossing and thinking of Edith and wondering who the man might be who had given her insomnia for a year. After midnight he gave up the struggle, dressed and went out to the corral, where he talked to the horses and watched the dim outline of Eagle Mountain, which guarded the Lawson ranch. He wondered if Edith were sleeping or awake with all the watchers of the moon that sent weird calls into the whiteness of the night—coyote, dog, owl and wildcat. They seemed indescribably melancholy to John, and he was glad when, with the coming of the dawn, the far calls ceased. He went to bed and to sleep.

At noon, old Aunty Farmer, who kept house for John, woke him. "They want you



In one of these intervals John heard the dull, thudding tramp of an unshod horse. a blue robe stumbled into view. It was


REMINGTON SCHUYLER

efore he could start his small cavalcade onward to meet the sound, a figure in
dith, and she was leading the blue roan.

to come and help hunt for the schoolma'am," she said.

John jerked on his trousers and strode into the dooryard. Pink Marshall and Art Brown were waiting for him.

"Hank sent word for us to come up," said Art. "Schoolma'am seems to have walked off somewhere last night."

Before he had finished speaking, John was throwing the saddle on Nelly.

"When did they miss her?" he asked, as they trotted out of the yard."

"Not an hour ago. Hank 'phoned to me then," replied Pink. "Said they always let her lie late on Sundays, she was such a poor sleeper. Mame tries to keep the house quiet. But when they went to call her for dinner, she wasn't there. At first they just thought she'd slipped out for a stroll without their noticing. Then Mame see she hadn't dressed—just gone out in her nightgown and slippers."

"Her nerves must be in awful shape," volunteered Art. "How do you suppose Easterners get that way? Now, whoever heard of a woman in Lost Trail having insomnia!"

"She'd better settle down here," said Pink. "She takes to this life fine."

"Shall we stop by for Dick?" asked John.

"He went to Cheyenne last night," replied Pink.

No one spoke again until they drew rein at the Lawsons' door. Mame greeted them.

"Hank's following the creek up. He said to tell you folks to scatter."

"Has he tried to put Shep on her scent?" asked John.

"Oh, yes; but you know Shep. He couldn't follow a skunk."

"Are you sure she went away in her sleep?" asked John.

"You just come in here, John," demanded Mame. "Art, you go get Shep. Maybe you'll have better luck, Hank's so sort of harsh with dumb brutes."

"I'm better at it than Art," declared Pink, dismounting to collar the trembling collie.

John followed Mame to the door of Edith's room. It was tiny, with plain rough log walls, but exquisitely clean. The bed was rumpled. The riding suit that Edith had worn the day before lay folded over the back of the chair. A little white pile of underwear was tossed across the chair-seat. John stood with his sombrero in his hand, his quiet lips pressed in a thin line. Mame pulled aside the curtain which made a closet of one corner of the room.

"I know all her clothes and there ain't a thing gone but her bath-robe and slippers. Besides, she told me that, ever since she was a child, whenever anything disturbed her in the daytime she was apt to walk in her sleep at night."

"What disturbed her yesterday?"

"How do I know? She never tells me what is really going on in her mind. But she's the nicest girl I ever saw, and I love her like she was my own kin."

John turned abruptly. "She must be right near. It's too rough a country for her to have gone far, dressed as she is."

"Why ain't she back then?" demanded Mame. "And there is another queer thing: The blue roan got away last night."

John made no comment. He already was mounting Nelly.

ALL day long they scoured the country in circles of ever-widening circumference. After sundown, before the moon rose, John returned to his house for a fresh horse and the equipment for living on the trail for a day or two. His arrangements made, he threw himself down to wait for the moonlight. And it seemed to him that he fell into a light doze and dreamed of Edith. First of all he heard her low voice: "John! Oh, John Hardy! Help me, John! Help me!"

And then he thought he saw her with a Chinese robe wrapped about her, wandering along a cañon, the walls of which were an iridescent pink. And she was wringing her hands and repeating: "John! Help me, John! Help me!"

He started from the couch with cold sweat on his forehead. "I'm going plumb crazy!" he muttered. "First time I've dreamed of her, though God knows she hasn't been out of my thoughts since she came here."

He pulled on his coat and went out to the corral. He mounted Pete and led Miss Lucky with a light pack on her saddle. The moon was just slipping over the far-flung silver line of the Indian range when Pete trotted out of the gate. John's first stop was at the Lawsons' for news.

"We ain't got a trace," reported Mame, "except one of the children found a little piece of her bath-robe on a nail in the corral. Looks like she must have dreamed of the blue roan."

"Let me see that piece of cloth," said John, following Mame into the kitchen.

The rancher's wife pointed to the bit of blue silk lying among the teacups on the table.

"What kind of a bath-robe was it?"

"One of those Chinese things you see in the store-windows at Salt Lake. She said somebody brought it to her from China."

John stared at Mame with widening eyes.

"You fix me a bundle of clothes for her, Mame," he said.

When she had done this, he rushed out of the room and put Pete to the lope. At the foot of Eagle Mountain he pulled up while he thought rapidly. He could recall a cañon weathered out of the pink sandstone which composed the chaos that lay between Dead Fire range and Many Eagles. But it was so inaccessible that it seemed to him highly improbable that Edith could have come upon it. And yet, even as he sat debating with his common sense, he seemed to hear the low voice of his dream: "John! Oh, John, help me!"

With a groan he whistled to Miss Lucky and turned into the Many Eagles trail. He knew he was a fool. He knew that Edith must have wakened long before she had come this far, even if this had been her direction. Yet the potency of the dream overcame every protest advanced by his lifelong experience in the hills, and hour after hour he pushed toward the chaotic valley beyond Many Eagles.

IT WAS after midnight when the trail around a mountainside opened into a cañon with sheer sides remotely edged by pines. The sides themselves were barren, but in the moonlight of a brilliancy of color that was almost unbelievable. There were many rock heaps on the floor of the cañon. John threaded his way carefully among these, stopping to rest at frequent intervals. The elevation was over eight thousand feet and the horses were making heavy work of it.

In one of these intervals he heard the dull, thudding tramp of an unshod horse. Before he could start his small cavalcade onward to meet the sound, a figure in a blue robe stumbled into view. It was Edith, and she was leading the blue roan.

When she saw John, she stopped and began to sob: "Oh, John! John Hardy!"

John dismounted and strode toward her. "Here I am, Miss Archer! What in heaven's name has happened?"

"I shot him!" sobbed Edith. "I had to!"

"Shot him! Are you hurt?" John took the lead-rope from her and she clung to his arm, struggling to control her sobs.

"No; only bruised. Don't speak to me for a minute. I'm trying so hard not to make a fool of myself."

John stood patiently for a moment; then he said: "Suppose you don't try to talk at all until you get into the warm things I've got on Miss Lucky's saddle for you? You put 'em on while I go round the rocks here and make us a little camp."

Edith nodded and John, after giving her the bundle of clothing, proceeded to make a great fire of sage brush and scrub cedar. By the time the fire was going well, Edith appeared around the rocks in her riding-suit, her face white and tense.

"Will you give me a drink of water?" she asked huskily.

John held his canteen to her lips. "Now, I'll put the coffee on to boil and get out the sandwiches Aunty Farmer fixed for me. Then you can tell me about it when you aren't so faint and cold."

"I must tell you now!" panted Edith.

John looked at her keenly. "Let me put the coffee-pot on and then you can go ahead," he said. "Sit down here out of the smoke."

"I didn't get to sleep quickly Saturday night," began Edith, "and when I did I had troubled dreams. I kept dreaming of the blue roan and that both you and she were hurt. I thought I'd better go to your rescue, and in my dream I went out to the corral, roped the blue roan and led her away. She was very hard to lead and she kept pulling me down, and finally one specially hard fall wakened me. I was alone on a strange mountain trail, so cold, and with my slippers all wet with dew. And I was so out of breath that I lay down under a cedar tree. While I was huddled there, I heard horses coming. I didn't know who it might be or whether it was just strays, so I didn't call. And then Dick Holton rode by with three horses, and one of them was the blue roan!"

"The blue roan! Did you really let her out? I know you couldn't have roped her."

"I must have let her out. I always did dislike him, and he's the last man in Lost

Trail I'd have wanted to rescue me. But I wasn't going to let him get away with that beautiful horse, especially as I felt guilty about her. So, after he had gone by, I followed him. I thought maybe he'd put her somewhere for safekeeping and then I could tell Mr. Lawson."

"And you followed him? Far?"

"I don't know how far. It seemed a long time. And then I fell and, like a great baby, I cried out and he heard me and came back. I was sitting against the rock I'd slipped off of and he just stood and looked at me. And I said, 'Where are you going with the blue roan?' and he said: 'I'm going to put her where your friend Hardy'll never glom his big hands on her. She was wandering loose and she's mine now.'

"And then I saw that he'd been drinking heavily and I told him I'd been walking in my sleep and that if he'd tell me the way home I'd be grateful. Then he laughed and said, 'God, lots of girls have been fond of me, but none of them ever followed me this way!' and he stooped over me and I struck him as hard as I could and he struck me back and tried to pick me up and kiss me. And he said, 'I'll fix it so you'll never want to tell any one in Lost Trail you've seen me.' "

John walked up and down before the fire, his big hands opening and closing.

"Then I fought him and managed to get his six-shooter out of his belt and I pressed it against him and pulled the trigger. And he dropped and rolled over—dead.

"Then I went and got the blue roan's lead-rope and started for what I thought was home, and I got lost and I thought you'd never come."

John stood staring at her, cold sweat on his lips. "How do you know he is dead? Did you examine him? Where did the bullet go?"

"I don't know where it went. I couldn't have touched him, could I? I wasn't trying to run away. I am going to give myself up to the sheriff as soon as I get back."

"Give yourself up, nothing!" cried John. "If you hadn't shot him, Lost Trail would have made a sieve of him. No one can get away with manhandling a woman or horse-stealing in these ranges, even if he is drunk. But maybe you didn't kill him."

He poured her a cup of coffee and held it to her lips with big hands that shook. She drank it and ate a couple of sandwiches.

"Could you sleep a little?" he asked, when she had finished.

She looked at him with horror.

"Sleep? No! How could I sleep with his awful voice in my ears?"

"Have you any idea where you were when it happened?"

"No," replied Edith.

"Was there any landmark you could describe? The moon was still high?"

Edith answered carefully: "The moon was just setting. There was a spring with a big tree growing above it."

"Blue Aspen spring! Edith, you've swung clear around the mountain and aren't two miles from it now. We can get to it by a short cut up the wall yonder."

"Get to it? Do I have to see him again?"

"Edith, I want to see whether you really killed him or not before we report to Lost Trail. You can stay here——"

"No! No! I dare not stay alone!"

"You needn't look at him, but stay back with the horses. Did you get any sleep today?"

Edith shook her head impatiently.

"No. I told you I couldn't sleep with his voice in my ears."

"Will you do something for me?" asked John gently. "Won't you lie down on my blanket here by the fire and rest with your eyes closed until dawn?"

Edith looked up at him pitifully.

"I know you despise me, but I don't dare to close my eyes unless you promise to sit by me."

"I promise," said John simply.

HE SPREAD the blanket for her, and when she had laid down on it he sat beside her. She slipped cold, trembling fingers into his and closed her eyes. John sat with his back against the rocks. The moon had set and the firelight shone alone on the slender, rigid body of the girl, on her pale set face. A half-hour slipped by; then John felt Edith's fingers relax, saw the lines between her eyes disappear and knew that she slept. He tossed more wood on the fire with his free hand and waited. An owl hooted loudly. Edith started and jumped at once to her feet. Then she stared at John while recollection awoke.

"I'm ready to start," she said.

"The sun will be here in a few minutes." John nodded to the east.

Swiftly the dawn was pricking out the fronded tops of the pines far above them. Faintly above the farthest pines rose the gigantic white outline of the Indian range, moment by moment growing more vividly colorful until its splendor paled the prismatic tints of the cañon. They watched the mighty day arrive in silence. When the sun was free of the pines, John turned to the horses. They were pulling restlessly at their ropes.

"These poor brutes are thirsty," he said. "Did you water the blue roan yesterday?"

"Yes; in the afternoon, at a little muddy spring. She grazed there, too."

"Did you have any trouble leading her?"

"No! Wasn't it queer!"

"Not so queer," mused John. "Sometimes you find a horse that's like a good dog and recognizes a friend. So, beauty!"—this to the restless blue roan as he approached her.

"Let me lead her," said Edith. "I do think a great deal of that horse!"

"Yes?" John smiled a little. "One might not have suspected it. You mount Miss Lucky and I'll give you the roan's lead."

And so they started. It was a short and not too arduous trip back to the Blue Aspen spring. It came into view as they rounded the shoulder of the mountain. First they saw Dick's two cow-ponies standing by the pool. Then they saw Dick lying by the water's edge. He raised his head at their approach. Edith gave a quick gasp. John dismounted and strode over to Dick's side.

"Where'd she get you?" he demanded.

"Left side and right hip," replied Dick weakly. "I was drunk."

"Bleeding much?"

"Not if I don't move." He lay staring at the sky, ghastly pale and worn.

"I'll leave you some grub," said John. "I'm going back and send the sheriff up here. I am not going to trust myself to touch you, you can bet on that. If you aren't dead by the time he gets here, my advice is that you keep your mouth shut."

Dick's lips set in a grim line, but he said nothing. And so they watered the horses and rode away and left him.

Edith did not speak for some moments. The relief was at first more than she could voice, but when after a mile of hard trail John called a halt for breakfast, she said,

"It's like waking from a nightmare!"

"I know." John nodded. "I'm about as relieved as you are, but only for your sake. He deserved more than he got."

THE breakfast was on the side of a mountain facing west. Remotely below lay the valley of Lost Trail. As they sat waiting for the coffee to boil, John said abruptly,

"I wanted to kill him where he lay."

"After all"—Edith's eyes were on the red mists of Bear Mountain—"he didn't harm me and I did save the blue roan."

John looked at Edith with something finer than admiration in his blue eyes. After a long pause, "What are you going to tell the sheriff?" he asked.

"I am going to tell him the truth."

"You'd better let me say I shot him while I was taking the blue roan and that I picked you up elsewhere."

Edith stared at his grim face, puzzled for a moment, then she exclaimed: "Oh, I see! But I'm not going to let you lie for me. Lies are very difficult. I never have met any one I thought clever enough to lie. And what about the story Holton will tell?"

"I'll bet Dick tells nothing and I'll bet he never stays in Lost Trail so long as I'm in it. And Lawson may shoot him up again for stealing the blue roan. He's good for a long stay in Rawlins if he gets well, and when he gets out of Rawlins, or before, if I can get at him, I am going to beat him up so his own mother won't know him. But what I have got to do now is to keep the he and she gossips of Lost Trail from bandying your name about. Just leave the story to me, will you, Edith?"

He crossed over to her and sat down beside her, looking into her face with such a depth of earnestness that she said, with a little uncertain color flaring in her cheeks,

"Yes; if it won't get you into trouble!"

"It won't!" He hesitated, then went on, "You haven't asked me how I came to be looking for you in such an unlikely spot."

Edith watched his face without speaking and John went on in his soft drawl:

"We were all hunting for you from yesterday noon on. At dusk I went home for fresh horses and I took a nap while I was waiting for the moon to rise. I dreamed that I saw you in the pink cañon in that blue Chinese thing and that you were calling to me like this: 'John! John! Help me, John!' Did you really call to me?"

"Yes," admitted Edith reluctantly.

"Why?" Edith did not answer. "Did you call to the others, Hank and Pink and Art?"

Still she did not reply, and John drew a sudden long breath. "Do you remember that talk we had at the schoolhouse, Friday afternoon, and I said that a man, even a rider, liked something beautiful and fine in his life once in a while. What did you think when I said that?"

"I thought how little the average woman really knows what goes on inside a man's mind. And I've been thinking that ever since. You see, any woman always thinks she's more refined, has more delicate perceptions than any man."

"Lots of 'em have," said John. "Me, I wouldn't know a delicate perception if I met one. Is that all you thought?"

Edith smiled whimsically. "No, I thought that most women were stupid egoists, me being among those present."

"I'm not sure what one of those critters is, but I know you aren't one. But what did you really think about what I said, Edith?"

"Well, I thought how blind you were not to see the enchanting beauty of the Lost Trail country and I thought, as I'd thought so many times before, how strange it was that all of Lost Trail's conversation was in sordid terms of cattle-raising when some of it might quite normally be in terms of the most soul-stirring scenery that ever intrigued a poor, futile Easterner."

John stared at Bear Mountain and the glory of the brilliant clouds beyond it, as if he never before had seen them.

"All my life," he said, "I have been looking for beauty till I found you!"

"Me!" exclaimed Edith, "I'm just a tired Easterner, with no nerve."

John grunted with a twisted smile at the blue roan, then he said: "Do you remember that I said that maybe there might be something pretty fine about love that we Lost Trail folks didn't know existed? And you answered that there ought to be something as fine here in love as there was in the beauty of the ranges. Edith, will you tell me what love means to you?"

She answered a little hesitatingly: "I thought I knew when I was in my teens, but as I've grown older I've discovered that what I thought was love could never endure. Now, I know that, no matter what any one says to the contrary, the love that endures is a thing of the mind, intangible and permanent and based on the irresistible attraction of soul to soul and not of body to body."

John cleared his throat. "If your mind or soul or whatever it was called across the mountains to us yesterday and only I heard and answered, might it mean that I felt this —this—intangible—oh, Edith, help me! I never would have had courage to say this much if you had not called to me in my dream."

"I called only to you."

"Why?" urged John.

"When I saw you break the blue roan with gentleness, I knew that I could care for you, but I've always hated the thought of marriage so! But—but now after this experience—John, I guess you've broken me with gentleness, too!"

"God!" breathed John. "Edith, could it mean that you would marry me?"

"It might." Her voice was a little uneven.

"Do you think you know how much and how little a man like me could bring you?"

Edith replied slowly, "I know that you are fine and simple and beautiful, like your great hills, and that your inner ear heard me call in my deep need."

John rose suddenly and lifted Edith to her feet. He took her tired face gently between his big palms and looked long into her eyes. Then he lifted her to his heart and kissed her. And she lay quietly, as if, after long wanderings, she had at last come home.

There will begin in an early issue of EVERYBODY'S

Godless Valley

A new serial by MRS. WILLSIE which will not only increase her hosts of readers but will cause much heated discussion. There will be further announcement of this next month.

Shagan

Have You Ever Given a Thought to the Meaning of Artistic Temperament? Have You Ever Tried to Visualize a Man who Played a Real Death Scene as Well as He Played a Mimic One? Either Way, this Tragedy Will Grip You

By James Oppenheim

Author of "Doctor Rast," "Idle Wives," etc.

Illustration by Mead Schaeffer

WINGHAM PRISON is on a hill. From the warden's window you can see the lights of Wingham and now and then a match-streak of a train passing. The warden, Tomlinson, had invited me up for dinner, and we were smoking our cigars in an alcove of windows. It was a clear, sharp, starry evening.

Tomlinson explained why his invitation had been so urgent. An electrocution was to take place at dawn. Probably I knew the case well; all the world knew it. It was Shagan, Phil Shagan, the motion-picture director, who had murdered the famous Connie Twiller.

When they came to get him after the murder, he was reciting from "Othello,"

"Put out the light, and then put out the light,"

and on examination they found that "Othello" had given him the idea of the murder. It was true that he had shot her first, but then he had suffocated the actress with a pillow. After that he had followed *Iago's* rôle, and refused to talk.

"I must say I like the man," said Tomlinson nervously, "and the idea of his dying in the morning—well, to put it mildly, it makes this cigar taste like quinine, and you know how I love smoking. He's fascinating, and the whole prison staff would do anything for him."

"Was he considered insane?" I asked.

"The alienists," said Tomlinson, "found him unusually well balanced. He took cocaine, you know; and so far as I'm concerned, he can have all he wants to-night, and anything else that will make the drop easy. But the strange thing is, he doesn't seem to care a bit about death. He told me that when he was an actor he played in 'Julius Cæsar' twice—the first time as *Brutus*, the second as *Cæsar*—and just as he did the assassin scene well, so he did the death scene well. 'It's just as a part, and I'll satisfy all present' "

The great chained silence of the prison at night was emphasized now by the tramp of an armed guard on the walk outside. Over any prison gate could be printed the words: "A Bit of Our Human Beast in Chains." There is just that restless feeling of a lion in a cage.

Tomlinson now told me why he sent for me. "He has no use for priests or the Church, and he laughs at our doctors. He has no relatives in this country and is glad of it. But I can't see the man meet death with the monster of his secret locked in his breast; so I begged him to see you. I said you were a psychologist and as hard as a nail."

"Thank you," I put in dryly.

He laughed good-naturedly. "Let it go at that," he said. "Unless you are hard, he'll have no use for you. 'Omit Flowers' is his way of putting it. Just the same, he's mortal flesh like the rest of us, and I know deep down he's walking in the hell of his shame and of his doom. So you'll see him, won't you?"

He stuffed some extra cigars in his pencil-pocket and led the way. We went through the dreadful and dim corridors with the cells above us in three exposed layers. The uniformed guard unlocked a metal door for us, and again we went along corridors. There was a second door, and we passed a third.

"That's where they do it," whispered Tomlinson.

"The death-chair?" I asked.

"Yes—just at the break of day he will be led in there and his life taken from him. It's a dreadful door to enter; it's the door to all that's eternal."

I felt the shiver of dawn in my bones, as it were, and a dark, somber atmosphere slowly enveloped me with the bitter, tragic mystery of life. Why Shagan, and not Tomlinson, or yonder guard, or myself? By what fate is one a criminal and another not? Why this particular human being? Who of us is without sin in his heart?

IN SUCH a mood I heard the guard unlocking a cell door, and a moment later I was looking into a very comfortable and cozy room. True, the high square window was barred, and a cot was against the wall; but Tomlinson had treated Shagan very handsomely. There was a warm rug on the floor, pictures on the metal walls, several leather-cushioned armchairs, and a writing-table with a desk lamp upon it. At this last sat a shaggy-haired, tall, dark fellow, in his shirt-sleeves and vest, smoking a pipe, and holding a fountain pen over some writing-paper.

He arose with the greatest courtesy and charm of manner and, when I was introduced, shook hands with me warmly. There was something very romantic about him and I had slightly the sense of a man like Edgar Allan Poe, or Jack Barrymore in Tolstoy's "Redemption." The imaginative touch was there. He stood, a little loosely bent in at the stomach, a hand with the pipe at his mouth, and his other hand in a trousers pocket.

He spoke to Tomlinson, nodding his head toward me. "Tom," he said, "this ought to be a gala night for him—getting the true confession of the greatest criminal of the century."

There was an awkward pause, but Shagan quickly put us at our ease.

"But," he said to me, smiling charmingly, "there's this advantage in being a great criminal. You prove a theory Lincoln, and I suppose Jesus, believed in. You prove that great criminals aren't any different from other men. Do you think that, too?"

"In dreams," I said, "we are all alike; but the criminal, like the genius, puts his dream into action. Only, the actions differ. You might have written a play on murder, as Shakespeare did, instead of committing murder."

He looked at me keenly. "You're the man for me," he said. "That was—you'll pardon me—a little test-question. I wanted to see if you blink the truth or not. For me—the truth—that's all I care for. Tom, old man, I'll see you later."

Tomlinson nodded, his eyes wide with admiration for the man, and, mumbling a few words, started to go.

"Oh," cried Shagan, detaining him, "I forgot, Tom! I particularly want to get up early in the morning. Would you mind having me called—say, at dawn?"

The ease and nonchalance of this remark took my breath away. Tomlinson actually said, "Of course," before he saw the sorry joke.

Then he flushed with embarrassment and went slowly out.

Shagan drew up a comfortable chair for me and took one himself, facing the light on the desk. Then I saw him clearly, as he lounged back, pulling on his pipe and contemplating me.

"Well," he said, "what do you think of me?"

"I think," I said candidly, "that you are a remarkable actor."

"Why?"

"Because the fear of death is strong in us, and because no man can endure the scorn of mankind."

Instantly his face grew gray, with that intolerable look of despair which I have seen twice or thrice before in my life.

"Yes," he said, half shutting his eyes, "always the actor. But my hell is here"—he put a hand on his breast—"a hell nothing can heal. And my fear of death is only one fear—that there may be no death." His voice deepened and trembled. "I may have to meet her in high heaven and weep before her—kneeling at her feet."

He now got on his knees like a child and put his head in my lap.

"You see, I'm only a poor miserable soul, doomed, doomed forever—I've fooled them all—but if I die without some other human being hearing my story, I shall shriek aloud like a child when they fasten me in the chair. O my God, my God," he cried, in long, wrenching sobs, "I, too, am to be crucified, and I, too, am forsaken by man and by Thee! To think of it—to-morrow morning. The end of all—the end of all!"

I was in the misery of that silence in which we share the sufferings of others. It is a lonely place to be, for the sufferer and the sympathizer. I could only stroke the shaggy head till the sobs died away and he groped to his footing and sank in his chair.

He looked at me, at last, with a sad smile.

"There's no reason you should be troubled over me," he said. "Don't be. Let me have my fling. I suppose a man in my position has that privilege."

I tried to reassure him.

"You are kind," he said, "and I'm glad you are with me. You can't drink my cup for me; but you can, perhaps, make it less bitter."

And then, after a silence, he began his story. "A strange story," he said, "and I'll try to skip the uninteresting parts."

He spoke with great composure, as if he had rehearsed the matter thoroughly, and only in this way could unburden himself at all.

"YOU see, I was born looking at a mirage. I mean, I was a child of the theatre. My father and mother were both actors in a little English road company. And my mother died when I was about five. So it was all in the hands of my father.

"It's true that he did his best for me; but that wasn't much. For he was an actor, restless, impatient, vain, egotistic, and he was only happy in front of an audience. He taught me to act, and I toddled out a mere child in 'Macbeth.' I think I was a nuisance to him; for I was moody and dreamy and restless myself, and couldn't stick to anything I didn't like. Luckily he had some good books and I devoured them. Shakespeare, of course, and the Bible, and a big volume of Dante with Doré's pictures, and later Goethe's 'Faust,' and, finally, some old Greek plays. In these books I lived, and on the stage. The rest was infinite boredom to me.

"I suppose you can't imagine the effect of living in the theatre. It's all mirage; it's all illusion and then disillusion. Your world suddenly appears around you; you live in it, and then as suddenly it melts away, leaving 'not a wrack behind.' You feel finally just what Shakespeare said, that 'all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players.' The cities and hills are stage-properties, the people are phantoms in masks. Presto! The lights will go out and everything disappear. So you are restless; you become a wanderer; you chase phantoms. You may finally thirst for something greater than life—that something I read about in Dante and Goethe and the Bible and in Shakespeare. Man is nothing; you must seek God. Loathing the natural, you search for the supernatural.

"When I was seventeen, my father died, and I found then I had been living on him. With all his temper and sulkiness and moods, he was the only bit of reality I had. And so, when he was gone, I was a lost soul. The craving in me became morbid, and it was then I learned to take cocaine——"

He paused and half-closed his eyes.

"Cocaine," he mused, "cocaine—blessing and curse! I've since learned that there are truer ways to find 'life more abundant'—the ways of white magic. But what did I know of that? I had found black magic. With a little drug, I did the trick which the genius does through nature itself—I opened the door of the world beyond man—" He stopped and looked at me suddenly. "Is that possible?" he asked.

"Quite so," I replied. "The kingdom of heaven is within us." I paused, and then added, "And also the kingdom of hell."

He leaned forward eagerly. "That's it. It's gospel truth. And I found heaven and hell. I seemed to transcend our human limitations and pendulated between ecstasy and despair, divine love and demonic hate. I was like *Faust* when he was delivered over to the devil. The world was in the hollow of my hand, and it didn't matter whether I felt like Christ or Satan. Power, man, power! That was the lure of it!" His nostrils expanded; he breathed sharply. "The power to create or to destroy; the ecstasy of being godlike."

"And what did you do when you felt this power?" I asked.

"Nothing—but go and play-act wherever I was. Talk."

"Then it was black magic," I said. "For it was sterile. You should then have created something—written poems or plays—anything. You see, every artist is a sort of Satan who gets this 'divine frenzy'—but out of it comes art."

"Oh, it's true," he cried, "only too true! No; I wasted my terrible inspiration in mere devilment and strutting. And the habit merely fastened on me until I lived for the drug alone. There's nothing new in the story, is there? The usual road. I grew careless of myself, seedy, and neglectful of my work. I could not hold down a job. My health was bad. I traveled about, always thinking a change would help me. And finally I had to take the meanest sort of jobs, and only in such jobs could I remain fixed, even for a short time.

"Finally, I drifted to this country. The movies were just in their swaddling-clothes then, and poor actors, the trash of the stage, were acting in the studios out of desperation. So I went with the Cam people, out in a New York suburb—but not to act, merely to be a helper to the property-man. I was slovenly, unkempt, careless, listless, except when I was shot full of coke, and at such times the actors, who despised me, feared me. They spoke carefully and minded their p's and q's, and I enjoyed it. I had a grandiose manner then, was abrupt and hard, or in a terrible dark passion.

"In those days, as you may guess, anybody could rise in the movies. The manager had to take the first man handy, for he could get no other. So when our property-man left, McVae called me into his office. He was a hard man, a real boss.

" 'Shagan,' he said abruptly, 'you've got a great chance. You can rise and become rich and powerful. This game is only beginning. Do you understand it?'

"I told him I did.

" 'I make one condition,' he said, looking me squarely in the eyes, 'and you know what that is. Shall we try it?'

"The strength of the man went into me.

" 'What shall I do,' I asked, 'when the misery is strong upon me?'

" 'I'll help you,' he said. 'You come to me, and I'll lock you in my inner office. It has every facility for living, as you know.'

"I did know it. For when under the pressure of work, he often slept there.

"So I accepted his offer. And then the great fight began. It was the fight of my life—the fight *for* my life. I endured the agonies of the damned, but I endured them. McVae was a marvel of patient strength. After he locked me in, often I'd beat on the door, beseeching just one shot of the stuff. But even when it interfered with his business, he refused to listen. He never wavered once, not even the time I grew desperately ill and was within an ace of dying.

"At that time his doctor advised giving me the drug—the only way to save me. 'He's dying for it,' he said.

"But McVae's face grew stony. 'Then he must die,' he said firmly.

"It was this that saved me. I had met an inexorable force, which I couldn't budge. The man was as strong as death. So I got well, and laughed at my old self, and couldn't bear even to hear coke mentioned.

"The change in me was marvelous. I spruced up. I got the best of clothes. I shaved every morning. All my power rose in me, and in a few months, I became a director. And one of the best, too. My pictures were famous, and my salary was fabulous. In short, I became rich and powerful, and had a voice in the company."

HE PAUSED now, and a great change came over him, as if all he had said was merely marking time before he began to unravel his tragedy. He leaned forward, his chin between his hands.

"I haven't said a word about women, although there were many in my life. But when I gave up cocaine I became, I suppose, a sort of monk. I lived for my work. Actors to me were what clay is to the sculptor. They called me merciless. They said I had no feelings—that I'd jump horses and riders off of cliffs, drop girls in parachutes, drive all night long to finish a film, and so on. And there was a truth in it. I became somewhat like McVae. Being an actor, you see, I had to play some part, and McVae was a strong part. I played it to the limit.

"Girls would try to 'get' me. They all failed. All but Connie Twiller——"

He had no sooner said the name than he

became deathly white, and crumpled back in his chair. I took his pipe from him, and he put a hand on his stomach. He was intensely sick. Then after a little he rallied; but after this he spoke more slowly and with visible effort.

"She came—down at the heels—looking for work. I was interested. She was pale and thin, and cold and strange. There was something dark, something mysterious about her. She was, in fact, half starved. She reminded me of my old self, the miserable old self, and my heart went out to her.

"Curious sense she gave me—not exactly serpentine—but one might imagine her eyes to glare in darkness like a cat's—some inner smoldering—something volcanic—but all ice outside. Her face was a long oval, her hair black, her eyes very dark, her complexion dark also. It wasn't long before I had two names for her: Comet, and the Tiger-Woman.

"I gave her work, and talked with her. She told me in a jerky sort of way of hard experiences, especially with men, beginning with her father, who had beaten her up to the day she ran away and went on the stage. But her father had broken her spirit, had put a cap on the volcano which kept it hermetically sealed. I warmed up mightily. I'd take the cap off.

"One night I walked home with her. Summer night, down in the Italian quarter. Crowds, noise. But her rooms were cool, with a moon shining in at the window, and all kinds of music playing about us, and people singing and laughing and cursing.

"I was bewitched, bewitched. But still I thought of her as a child, and I took her in my arms and said: 'Connie, you're going to have a new father, and he is going to make you famous and great. Your time has come.' And I kissed her on the forehead, as though I were her father.

"Then the discipline began. She used to say I was like her own father, and did everything but beat her. Really, I whipped her into shape. She didn't know a thing about acting, and I started with Hamlet's advice to the players and broke her in as one breaks in a colt. I'd put her through her paces until she begged for mercy. But I was still the monk, and because I had no mercy on myself, but whipped desire down, so I had no mercy on others, and especially on her. One thing was necessary: she must succeed. One day she fainted from over-effort. I revived her, strong as old McVae, and drove her on.

"And then we did 'Antony and Cleopatra,' and she became famous as the Serpent of the Nile. You might say I crowned her queen, for one night I gave her my talisman, something I'd never let away from my body—a ring, a ruby ring my mother had left me. And she embraced me and said:

" 'Daddy mine, so long as I live I'll wear this. I swear to you I shall never part with it.'

"But it was almost immediately after this that I noticed a change in her. She had taken on flesh, and there was a touch of the voluptuous about her. More of the tiger showed in her, a languorous grace with something burning in it—a slowness about her that was almost ominous. And externally she was very cold.

"HER salary went to the sky, and she lived accordingly. Jewelry, fine clothes, luxury, and waited on all the time, hand and foot. And men hovering around her, and other motion-picture managers trying to buy her. Then temperament began to show. She was like a spoiled child.

"There are people who cannot stand success. Connie was one of them. A devil in her reared his head; she became coldly ambitious; she determined to have the world at her feet.

"And so her revolt against me and my discipline began. I soon saw her game. She had to conquer me. Some people are like that. They have to conquer the person who made them. Because I had made her, and yet kept her in my small world, she had to wreck me, in order to trample me down and walk out to some greater world. She seemed to hate me because I had helped her, as though thus I had made her my slave. She compared me to her father and laughed mockingly and said the time had come to get rid of fathers.

"I fought back hard. But she became cold, distant, pretended not to hear my orders, commanded me to do things, was inflexible as I, flirted with others in my presence. Finally, she accepted invitations from Gavin, the famous director. She tried to make me jealous, and she succeeded.

"Thus my ruin began. Suddenly I found that I was madly in love with her, that the worse she treated me the more I loved her, that it was I that was the slave. My McVae mask dropped off me. I made love to her at last, and she repulsed me. She laughed in my face.

" 'Shagan, Shagan,' she cried, 'I'm going to see the devil in you!'

"I warned her against opening the doors and gates of the inferno in me; but this made her the more determined.

" 'You're not a man,' she said, 'but a mask. You're a shadow of McVae.'

"And she taunted me about the cocaine. I had, of course, told her all about it; and she said if I was a man I'd take the stuff and be a god again, and a devil. It was that way she wanted to see me. She called me a coward and a goody-goody, a mollycoddle, a woman masquerading as a man. She maddened me. Finally, in pure devilishness, she offered me cocaine and I took it.

"In fact, I was ready to do anything for her—die in the gutter, if necessary—and I had a mad notion that if I could break loose all hell and heaven within me as I used to do, she would fall madly in love with me. And indeed the first time she was plainly frightened, and I seized her, and pressed kisses on her lips and threatened to kill her. She locked herself away from me.

"I was flattered. I took the stuff again. But this time she kept her maid in the room, and scorned me, weary and bored, and merely said: 'You've become my slave. You're done for, Shagan.'

"It was true. Within a few weeks I lost all the ground I had gained. And nothing could help me. McVae was abrupt as ever, but not even McVae could win the love of Connie Twiller for me. My work went to pot, and at last Connie signed up with Gavin and went over to his company.

"I lost my job. I drifted around a wreck. I grew seedy again. I flung away my money. And now Connie refused to see me, shut the door in my face. I began now to plan to murder her. I saw her and Gavin together, and my jealousy was utterly insane. Lines in 'Othello' kept running through my head, and I kept thinking of how *Othello* murdered *Desdemona*.

"And now I touched bottom in my baseness and self-contempt. I cringed before Connie; I wrote begging letters. I begged to see her again. And when she wrote and said that she'd see me if I'd never bother her again, I promised. So I went to see her——"

Death was in his face, which was bathed in sweat. He moaned softly.

"Oh, the beauty and horror of that night! She was on the twelfth floor, with great windows opening over the city, and it was June, a starry night, and all the lights in the windows sprinkled down the town. I had to dose up with the dope before coming, I felt so weak. And when I entered I felt godlike—erect, firm and proud.

"For a while it was like old times. She seemed to soften, and I worshiped her. She came into my arms and kissed me, and called me 'old daddy.' I recited to her from 'Antony and Cleopatra:'

'I am dying. Egypt, dying.'

And the tears came into her eyes. I thought the terrible months were wiped away and that I could be a man again. I only asked her to be my friend, and she promised. It was a reconciliation.

"AND then the 'phone-bell rang and she answered it. I knew at once it was Gavin, and I knew that I saw a new Connie Twiller before me. Never had I heard this voice before—one of soft tenderness and docility, and the ring of a great passion.

"So that was it. You know what I said about the dope. When I was under it, I was, as they used to say, possessed of a spirit. And I could switch easily from the divine to the demonic—the god could change into a devil. That is what happened.

" 'Put out the light,' I muttered, 'and then put out the light,' the lines *Othello* spoke as he went to murder *Desdemona*.

"As she dropped the 'phone, I rose slowly. She saw the change in me. 'Give me your hands', I said.

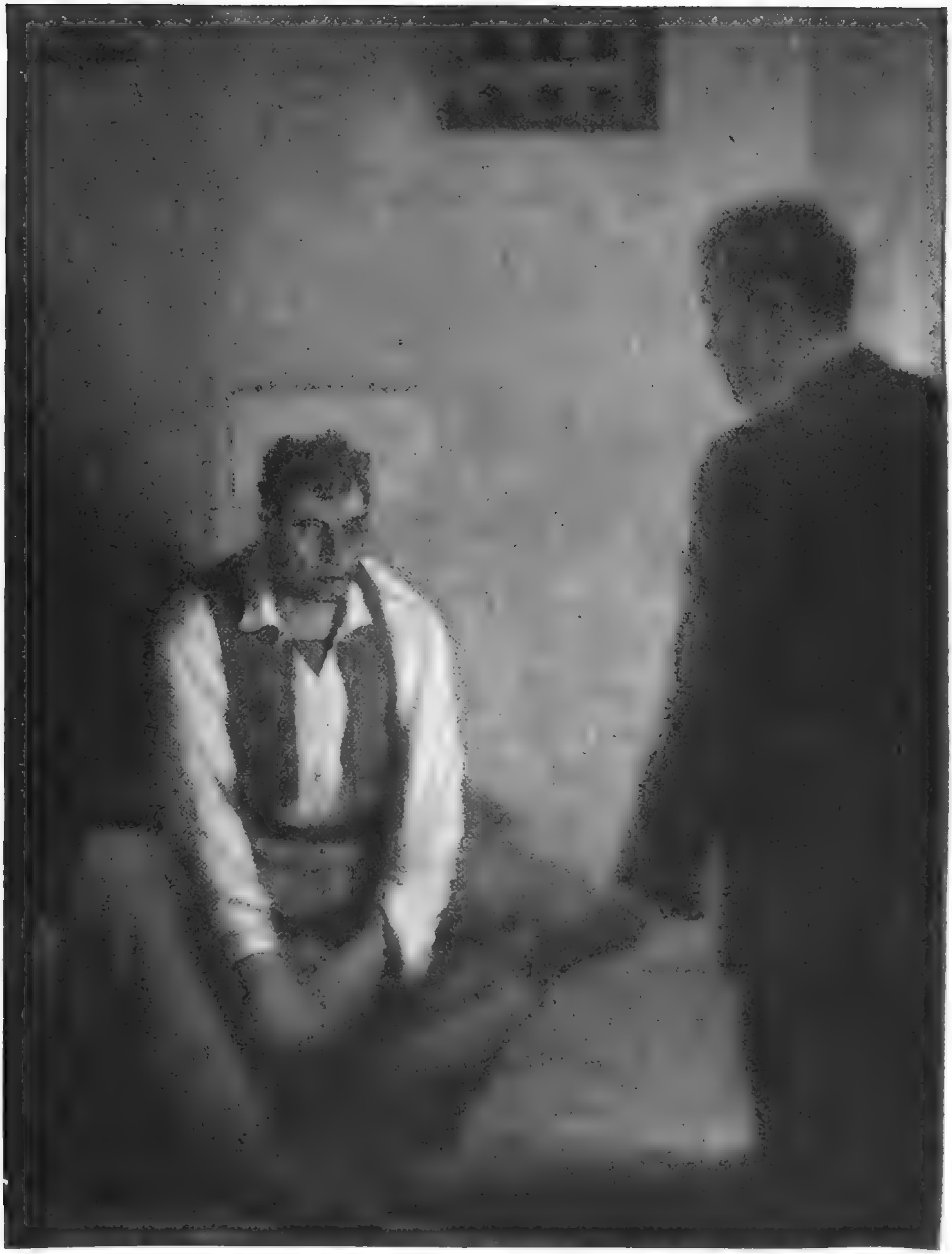
"She grew pale and trembled, but without a word held out her hands. I took them. And I saw the solitaire diamond, and I saw, too, that my ruby ring was gone.

" 'You're not wearing the ruby,' I said.

"She was almost choking. I squeezed her hands so that she cried out, 'Let go, Shagan, or I'll scream!'

" 'You'll never scream again,' I cried, 'you vile beast! Where is my ring'?

"Her bosom was heaving up and down and she tried to break loose, but I kept on clamping her hands and crying insanely:



Shagan paused, staring into space. "And in a few hours I must die," he muttered. "For that!"

'Where is my ring? Where is my ring?' Suddenly I flung her to the floor, and she rose, screaming, and staggered toward the door of the hall.

"It was over in a minute. I had whipped out a revolver and shot five times. One—two—three—four—five—plain and distinct. And she fell in her own blood. Then I seized a pillow from the lounge, and cried out:

> 'Put out the light, and then put out the light.'

"When they came to get me, that is what they heard me saying. I was quite out of my mind."

He paused, staring into space. There was no blood in his cheeks. The final effect of his own recital seemed to be to make him cold and rigid and beyond emotion, as though frozen in horror.

"And in a few hours I must die," he muttered. "For that!"

Then he looked at me. "What is this thing—*death?*" he asked. "What is it, just outside the door there? Do you know—or guess?"

"No," I said; "I don't know."

He pointed to the barred window, and I rose and looked.

"There's a star up there," he said. "I think it is Betelgeuse. Did you read about Betelgeuse in the papers? It's a star in Orion. Do you think the destiny of human beings is worth considering or worrying over? Betelgeuse, they say, if it were as near us as the sun, would cover and fill our whole sky. It's twenty-seven million times the bulk of the sun. It's so far off the light takes one hundred and fifty years to reach us. I think of the heavens this way: Imagine clouds five miles up, and far below the clouds a spark flying in the wind, and some dust-grains blowing with the spark. The clouds are the Milky Way, the universe of stars—the spark and dust-grains are our sun and its planet. One of the dust-grains is the earth. Lost, isn't it? And here are you and I, and we're full of trouble. I'm what is called a murderer. I put out the light in one of us tiny midges; so now they are going to put out my light. Why worry about it?"

I came close to him. "Shagan, it's all true—but to a man, his own soul is greater than the stars. To a man, this life of earth means something that not even death can quench."

He looked haggardly at me, and I saw a change again, an inner breaking-down take hold of him.

"Oh, am I lost?" he cried, taking my hand with both his. "Am I utterly lost, forever and forever?"

"Turn to your own light," I said, "to the light that cannot be put out."

"She was my light!" he cried, and sank to his knees. "Connie, Connie, my beloved, my darling!" And, wrenched with sobs, he stretched out on the floor.

When the paroxysm was passed, he sat up on his hand and spoke as simply as a child. "Last night, I saw a vision of the Christ——"

"Turn to it," I said.

"But I can't believe in such things."

"You needn't," I said. "It is enough to turn to it—for it may be merely an image of your own soul, come to comfort you."

He arose heavily.

"Tell me what to do," he murmured, "and I will do it."

"Accept death now," I said; "don't wait. 'Except ye die, ye shall in no wise be born again.' Die now——"

"How now?"

"Surrender—lie down and give up the inner ghost—renounce life and find peace."

So I helped him stretch on the cot, and sat beside him. Later, when Tomlinson inquired, he refused to accept any cocaine or whisky.

OF THE rest, I say little, very little. I stayed till dawn, when they came for him. Nor did I follow him out; for he begged me not to see that final play-acting. He whispered, "All is well with me," and as they waited at the door—those men in uniform—he came into my arms and kissed me on the forehead.

Then he turned, and I did see the acting begin. He looked proud and tall, and every inch a king.

He spoke rollingly, and with a gesture of command:

"So Shagan dies, a fool like *Othello*, a knave like *Falstaff*, a dupe like *Antony*, a lover like *Romeo*, a prince like *Hamlet*—It all remains with you. Forward! 'The rest is silence.' "

So he went. And, I may add, he died without a whimper, a great actor in his death. I must confess I was shaken to pieces and went home amazed at the miracle of man and aghast at the criminal in us all which commits crime against the committers of crime. And again I asked myself the question: "Who of us is without sin in his heart?"

The Uneven Struggle Between Destroyer and Conserver

FORAKER'S FOLLY

A Red-Blooded Novel of To-day

A Man's Pride Gives Way Before a Woman's Courage. The Spoiled Son of a Millionaire Finds a New Viewpoint from Which to Observe Life and Discovers That the Scheme of Things Cannot Be as He Would Have It

By Harold Titus

Illustrations by R. K. Ryland

IN THE gray mist of a May morning John Taylor descended from the sleeper at the hopeless little town of Pancake, Michigan. In company with one other passenger he made his way to the Commercial Hotel and inquired about a conveyance to White's camp. The clerk referred him to his fellow traveler.

"The livery can take you up," the latter told him. But he added, "White's gone; camp's abandoned."

John's heart sank. This was his third warning. He had noted with suspicion the significant glances that passed between his father and Phil Rowe, secretary and confidential man, some ten days before down in Florida, when the old man had made the offer. And only yesterday, in Detroit, his father's attorney, to whom he had gone for suggestions, had said, "You know the situation, of course?" and he had replied hesitantly, "Why—yes," although he had no idea what the lawyer meant. And now to learn that the camp where were the three hundred thousand feet of hardwood lumber his father had given him as a start in life was abandoned! Where were his logs, and how was he to get them out?

Old Luke, worn out with toil and early hardships, rich, indeed, but now, in semi-invalidism, forced to spend his remaining winters in Florida, had met with curt refusal his son's request that he provide sufficient capital for him to begin life's climb without having to tread the lower rungs of the ladder. No; John would get no "flyin' start." He had had the best of education and every advantage, but he must commence at the beginning and show what he could do. And so Luke had given the boy the lumber. "Mebbe your fortune's there in them logs, boy," he said. "Well, there's your chance. Take it or leave it."

John took it, although it meant giving up Marcia Murray, temporarily, at least—Marcia, who would not leave comfort behind to take up the rough life of the woods with him. He must go away from her fearing a rival in Phil Rowe.

John's fellow traveler to Pancake was none other than Jim Harris, attorney for the Chief Pontiac Power and Light Company, supplying electricity to many Michigan towns. He had made money selling land. When the two became known to each other, Harris said:

"You're headed for White's camp to look after those logs, I suppose. Everybody knows the trick that was turned on your daddy. Say, Taylor; that was a shame. I expect your daddy'll put the screws on White."

But John's pride forbade him to ask any questions, and he made arrangements to set out at once for the camp. It was noon before he started, in a decrepit Ford driven by a weak-faced boy who frequently partook of bad liquor from a bottle. Late in the afternoon the engine stopped; repairs were slow, and darkness was coming on when they hove in sight of a little settlement, which the garrulous driver had spoken of lightly as "Foraker's Folly." "Foolish Foraker" was dead—he who used to talk about raising timber like a crop—but his daughter still lived there—in debt, and with only some swamp-land to get a living from.

At the supper-table John learned Helen's story. Her father, in the middle 'Seventies, had had an idea born of a vision of coming necessity. The pine wood was giving out. So he bought a denuded tract, and having studied forestration in Europe, put in the rest of his life making this land produce its second crop, and she was carrying out her father's projet. The growth was fifty years old now.

"Growing new forests is what my father called 'national life insurance,' " said Helen.

Taylor could not but think of his own father's case. All zest in life had been taken from old Luke since his pine lands were stripped. He had been the destroyer as Foraker was the conserver.

"What was lumber for?" he had said to John. "Some flapdoodle old women are callin' us devastators. They use it, don't they? They sob about the next generation, but why should we care about what's comin'?" And so he had gone on ruthlessly felling the trees until there was none left on his vast acres.

As the evening wore on, John found himself getting more and more interested in his hostess, and a little later he had a chance to do her a good turn.

Sim Burns, a candidate for supervisor in the township and an unwelcome suitor for Helen's hand, came to pay a call. Once more he made his proposal, accompanied it with a threat that if she did not accept him he would drive her away by increased taxation if he were elected. He seized her wrist, as he exclaimed:

"Choose now! It's one or the other—me an' your forest, or neither!"

But Taylor promptly threw the ruffian out into the rainy night.

"I thank you," Helen said. "It's lucky for me you were here."

John laughed.

"And it's lucky for me that I was here. Helping you gave me a real thrill."

His voice was low and gentle—too low, too gentle—but it carried something to Helen which she could not fail to grasp. She studied his face a moment, looked down at the hand that had been moved across the table very close to hers, and then lifted her eyes to meet his gaze.

"Please don't," she said abruptly. "There is no one here to throw you out, Mr. Taylor. Besides, I didn't think you were quite that sort."

He straightened, flushing, feeling cut and whipped. It was a welcome relief that just then the telephone-bell rang and the girl rose to answer it.

THE side of the telephone conversation which Taylor overheard through his confusion indicated surprise and regret. Finished, the girl turned and for a moment looked squarely at him and he flinched inwardly, for he expected that elaborate denunciation would follow; but when she spoke she said:

"I am going to ask you to go with me on an—errand of mercy. A woman is very sick a few miles away. The telephone line between them and town is down and they have sent for me to come. I can help there, perhaps; but we may need some one to send into Pancake after the doctor. Will you go with me?"

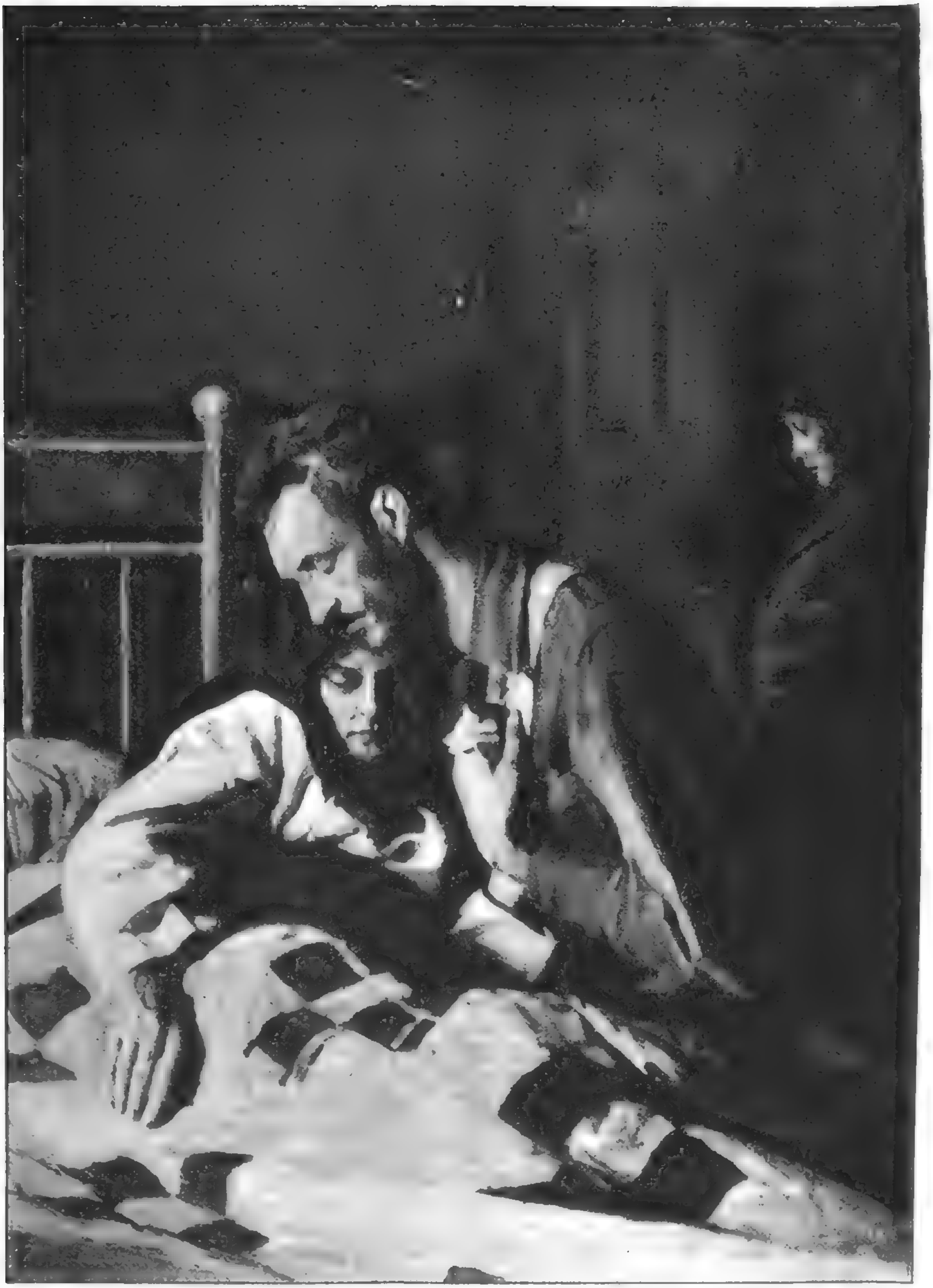
"Why, of course," he stammered, at once relieved and mortified to think that she should ask a favor of him in that moment.

He hurried to his room for coat and hat and then followed Helen out of the house to a shed where her car was sheltered. It was a one-seated Ford with a box body.

Little was said; the girl was occupied with the difficult driving, for rain streaked the wind-shield, and Taylor was busy with an attempt to reestablish his own assurance. He had overstepped himself, had been brought up sharply; but instead of treating him with resentment, as he expected, this girl had called on him for help. Strange, surely!

With hardly an exchange of words they covered the distance to the Harris settlement, turned from the main road and stopped before a house.

A door opened and a man stood silhouetted in the light. "She asked for you," he



The girl whispered her husband's name. "Yes, Jenny?" He slipped to his knees and leaned across the bed. "Hold me close," she murmured. "Closer!"

said cautiously as Helen, followed by Taylor, approached the steps. "She's just dropped to sleep."

"Could you get the doctor?"

"Sim Burns was going by," the man replied, "and I sent word by him."

Helen entered, drawing off her gloves.

"If he doesn't come in an hour, Mr. Taylor had better drive in for him. Mr. Parker, this is Mr. Taylor."

Parker closed the door and shook hands silently with John, who recognized him as the man who had waved at Lucius that afternoon. His unshaven face was very white and his black eyes seemed abnormally large against its pallor.

"Doctor was here this morning," he said huskily. "He said—" He swallowed and shook his head. "He said a day or two would tell."

HELEN looked about the small room. It was well ordered and with a minimum of material it had been given an air of comfort, of stability.

"What can I do?" she asked.

"Nothing, unless she——"

From behind a closed door came a stirring and a weak, muffled voice. "Thad?"

He moved quickly.

"Yes, Jenny"—opening the door.

"Who's there?"

"Miss Foraker."

"Oh—I'm so glad!"

Helen stepped to the door. Parker took the oil-lamp from its bracket and went into the bedroom, where a very slight, very pale girl lay under a patchwork quilt. One of the thin, white hands on the cover stirred. She was very young, and the pain, the pallor, the weakness reflected in her face, could not cover completely her girlhood.

"I'm so glad," she whispered; "so glad you've come— I've thought about you so much— I wanted to send for you; I think you, maybe, can understand about us better than any one else."

Helen sat down beside the bed. Parker placed the lamp on a table and stood looking down at the two women, lips loose and hands limp at his sides. In the other room Taylor sat quietly near the roaring cook-stove in the shaft of light which came from the bedchamber.

"I didn't know you were so sick or I'd have been here before," Helen said very gently. The other tried to smile again and moved her hand. Helen took it between hers, and the sick girl closed her eyes peacefully. "I heard about—about the beginning, of course; I didn't know you'd had such a hard time. Perhaps the worst is behind, though, and that is something to be thankful for."

The head on the pillow moved weakly in denial of the suggestion.

"It's all over," the thin voice said. "I know. The doctor knows, but he won't say it. Thad knows, but he won't give up hoping." Her husband's hand twitched but he made no remonstrance. "He has more strength to hope than I had— I haven't any at all—now."

"Oh, that can't be——"

"It's sweet of you to try to be cheery," the thin voice interrupted. "But please don't. I haven't much strength to talk and I want to talk, because it will make me feel easier in my—heart."

Color had come into her cheeks and a telltale brightness in her eyes. Her legs stirred restlessly.

"Ever since we came here two years ago I've wanted to know you. Ever since I found out what you are doing and what Jim Harris is doing— But I've been a little afraid— You're so busy—you have such a big job—" She coughed and waited for breath. "You're the first woman I heard about. They told me you were crazy, that your father was crazy, and at first I believed it because everybody I knew said so— Then I found out— You're doing something with this land that no one else has the courage or the patience to do—this land which means so much and so little."

She moved her head so she might look into Helen's face.

"You've been here long enough to know what goes on. I just want you to know that we—Thad and I—know you're right now.

"I'll have to go to the beginning— You see, this was to have been our home—our cottage, our vine and our fig tree. Thad and I worked in the same office in Chicago—we hated it, both of us, hated the city, hated the grind that didn't seem to get people anywhere but to money—a very few. We'd never known the country, but we used to spend our Sundays walking in the woods, and we got the idea that when we married we'd like to—go back to the land.

"Our interest made us good prospects for the sharks." The vaguest hint of bitterness crept into the feeble tone. "Several of them came and talked and explained and worked our hopes up. Then Harris's man came. He was the most—the most competent of any of them. He had pictures of headquarters here, and pictures of prosperous farms—taken in another county, we found out afterward. They offered to pay our expenses up here to look the property over. It all sounded so good that we signed the option——"

SHE closed her eyes a moment and breathed quickly, gathering strength. Her husband sat down on the bed and rested a hand on one of her covered knees.

"It wasn't any option— We found that out when we got here. It was an iron-clad contract. They had our word and some of our money. We didn't know what we were getting in for because we were only city people—who wanted to get onto the land— We gave them more money to save what we'd already put in. We left our jobs and came here to live.

"At first it didn't seem so bad. It wasn't what we had expected, but we still had plenty of hope left. The land was cheap, we thought; we believed we were pioneers and were quite proud to stand the racket for the first few months. But we saw other families leaving and some staying here and starving, and our land didn't yield, and the more we learned about it the less we could hope that it ever would grow crops— Little as it cost, it was very expensive—

"We were suckers, you see—suckers for the land sharks! They took our money, and we put our hope in behind the money—and it wasn't possible to get either out."

She swallowed with an effort; a tear glistened on her lashes.

"Then—when we knew a baby was coming, we didn't care so much about this failure. We thought we could get enough to eat, anyhow, and with the baby we would be so happy. We planned to give it one more summer's trial and then in the fall, when I was strong enough, we'd go back to the towns where Thad could get a job and we could begin all over again if we had to— .We were young then, you see——"

Helen leaned forward and stroked her brow soothingly. "And you're still young."

The head beneath her hand moved in denial.

"Old," the woman whispered. "Very old— Very old, Helen— You don't mind that, do you? I've been your friend so long—without knowing you——

"And then the baby—" She swallowed again and paused. "That is what made me old, Helen. If he had lived, it might have been different— But when he didn't even cry—not once—something broke inside me—and when the doctor told me I couldn't ever have another baby—you see, the last hope I had went out——"

She closed her eyes and did not open them as she said: "I lost him because I'd worried so much over our mistake; I'd worried beneath the surface; I grew weak with it and thought I wasn't worrying. I lost everything with that worry, even the desire to live, finally— I——

"That's what this place is: a graveyard for hopes!" Her voice was suddenly stronger. "That's what Jim Harris and all his kind are: murderers of hope! Worse than that, he killed my baby! Jim Harris"—struggling to sit up. "If there ever was a man without heart or scruple, it's Jim Harris!"

The color had gone from Helen Foraker's face then, and her brows were gathered in suffering. Her lips were set; she made no attempt to speak, but once more she took the girl's hand and the cold fingers clutched hers desperately.

"We went to him when we saw the trick that had been played. He wouldn't give us back a cent— He was hard— He can be hard— He would listen, but he had so many answers, so many reasons— Legal reasons— He is so good-natured, seems to be so friendly. That is why he has this—awful success!

"Back to the land!" she muttered after a pause. "Ah, such land! And if we had known, we could have gone north, just a few miles, into the hardwood cut-over and made a go of it. We'd have had our cottage, our vine, our apple tree. We'd have had our baby, Thad and me—and we'd have had our hopes—our youth——

"And there's so much land for the land-hungry, so much good land that weary city people might have if they only knew more— So much— I can't— I——"

She drew a hand across her eyes. When

she spoke again, her voice was little more than a whisper.

"And even this land is good land for those who have vision, for such men as your father must have been, for women like you, Helen. Timber! Timber as a crop! They all said you were a fool, and I believed them, until I—saw. You've gone ahead and paid no attention to their jeers; you had the dream, and a wealth of hope— They say yet—you can never pay out— But I don't—believe them— They are so ignorant.

"I hope it all comes right for Foraker's Folly— I hope they see the wisdom in it——

"Oh, this graveyard! This graveyard of hopes! A cottage—and peace—and enough— It wasn't wealth we wanted—only peace—peace——"

For an interval the others waited, watching the rise and fall of her chest. "Peace," she whispered again and her lips formed other soundless words and then were still——

"Asleep," whispered Helen, and Thad nodded, brushing his eyes.

Carefully she laid the hand she held back on the covers, rose and stepped from the room. Parker remained there, taking the chair Helen had left, bending over his wife.

IN THE kitchen Taylor rose when Helen tiptoed across the bare floor. She motioned him back to his seat and took a rocker which was near the stove, where the firelight, playing through the cracks, fell upon her face. Her lips were still set, brows drawn, but with the sympathy and pain in her eyes was something else—a light, a determination which John Taylor had never before beheld in the face of a woman. It was something tremendous, something beyond his experience; he was not equipped to analyze it, though three hours before he had thought he knew women— Now he could only sense the power of this girl.

For half an hour no sound came from the bedroom. Then the girl whispered her husband's name.

"Yes, Jenny?"

He slipped to his knees and leaned across the bed.

"Hold me close," she murmured. "Closer! And Thad? Thad? Thad?"

He looked about and shoved the door shut with one foot to exclude those others who had come to help and could not. They heard a creaking of the bed as though he drew the girl closer into his arms; they heard his voice murmuring, and heard hers.

Rain rattled on the roof and lashed the thin shell of the house; wind yelped at the cornices. The clock struck rapidly and ticked on. Helen filled the stove-box with wood and sat down again.

"If the doctor isn't here in a few minutes," she said, "you had better go on."

"I'll be glad to. Can't I go now?"

He was eager to escape.

"No; he may be on the way, and you may be needed here."

The brisk clock and the fire made the only sounds within. No noise came from the other room, now. Headlights of a car appeared far off. Helen rose and went to the window, and as she moved across the room they heard Parker stirring behind the closed door. He came out, walking very slowly, stiffly, carrying the lamp. He put it in its bracket and opened the damper in the stove, moving mechanically, like a sleepwalker.

"Here comes the doctor," said Helen.

Thad started as though her presence surprised him.

"Doctor?" he asked, in a croak that made her look at him sharply.

"Oh!" he said. "O God, he's too late!" His legs gave under him. He sank to his knees and his weight sagged back upon his heels. His head was bowed, with clasped hands pressed against his lips. "Too late," he whispered unsteadily. "She stopped worrying—in my arms."

It was not yet midnight when Helen Foraker and John Taylor drew up before the house in the forest. They had not spoken a word on the way back, but after they entered the great warm room Taylor lighted a cigaret and spread his hands before the fire and said dully,

"Lord, that's terrible!" And then added that which was in his mind and had been since he had heard Jenny Parker talk. "I met Harris in Pancake this morning. I'd hate to——"

He did not finish.

The girl commented dryly: "Jim Harris is one of those who don't care about waiting very long for returns on an investment."

Taylor recalled the comment he had made on her own forest at the table that night, and her words were like a lash across his face.

And at that hour, under live-oaks bearded with moss, Marcia Murray sat with crossed knees under the steering-wheel of her runabout. Beside her Philip Rowe lounged, a smile on his thin lips, toying with a magnolia blossom.

"Like a flake of moonlight," he said softly, holding it up against the shadows. "As white as your throat, Marcia!"

He dropped the blossom and leaned toward her, arm sliding along the back of the seat. The girl drew away.

"Be cautious," she murmured.

"With you I know no caution——"

"You did when John was here."

He frowned.

"Discretion," he corrected, and his glowing eyes twinkled. "I envied him."

"He has everything you want, hasn't he, Phil?"

"He has you, it seems."

"And his father's fortune?"

One of Rowe's hands ran over his chin.

"Not yet," he said, and in the casual words was a degree of triumph.

The girl looked up quickly.

"Old Luke *does* like you, doesn't he?"

"He likes any one who persists—and persists—and persists. With Luke as with others, persistence wins."

He leaned farther toward her with that, and the smile was gone from his eyes; gone from the girl's face, too, and she betrayed a flash of bewilderment, of wild guessing; the composure came back, though, and when he reached for her hand again, she let her cool fingers nestle in his palm. But she did not permit him to hold her close—very close—not that night.

"The other day you mentioned something about a new Taylor will," she mused. "You were—interrupted before you could finish."

He smiled. "You are mistaken, my dear. I was not interrupted. I stopped—when I had told enough."

Their eyes met in smiling challenge.

THE storm ended before dawn, and when John Taylor awakened, it was to see a springtime sun striking through the clean green of pine, setting the drops on twig and needle blazing with the splendor of jewels. It was all so fresh and vigorous. He sprang from bed and drank deeply of the fine air—and then remembered.

Last night's experience hung at his heart like a cold weight. He felt older, more mature. He had seen death before, yes; but it had never come close to him as had the death of that strange girl in hopelessness and misery. And then there were other factors: This matter of money; how Jim Harris made it had seemed well enough yesterday afternoon, but a half-dozen hours later the practise had become peculiarly hideous. Also, Helen Foraker's attitude, his attempt to make a very broad bid for supremacy in the natural clash of their personalities, her rebuke and her ready dismissal of any evident ill-feeling to ask him to ride through the night with her.

It would have been less uncomfortable had she been afraid of him. It would have made him feel important, after a manner; as it was, he felt of very little consequence.

A car approached and he heard voices: Helen's and a man's. They entered the room below as he began dressing.

"There's nothing any one can do, Milt," the girl was saying. "Some of the neighbors are there, but Thad wanted to be left alone more than anything else. He is going to bury her there, beside the house. She wanted it that way, he said."

Pause.

"Sim Burns stopped at the mill last night," the man said. "He made threats."

"After he'd made them to me."

"He was here?"

"Here in this room. He—Mr. Taylor saved me a scare by putting him out. He got quite—rough."

"Talked taxation, did he?"

"Yes—that was enough."

"You know what that means," he said. "You know he has it on you. There's no use trying to fight the law, even if it is unjust. Can't you quit before it is too late?"

She shook her head. "Don't, Milt, please! I can't quit empty-handed."

"You've a fortune here now. You're gambling on a chance to lose everything and win very little more. It's——"

"It's only the beginning of the pinch. It was bound to come. We've got to go through with it."

He leaned over, fists on the desks. "Is

that all you can think of, Helen? Of the forest? Isn't there something else? Can't you think of me—just a little?"

Her face grew troubled. "I wish you wouldn't, Milt. Love is a big, big thing; the forest is a big, big thing. I haven't time for more than one big job."

He looked at her with his jaw set strangely and after a moment moved away and breathed, "Sometimes I hate this damned forest!"

She started sharply.

"Milt Goddard!"

The man whirled then. "I mean it!" he cried. "It stands between you and me!"

"If you hate the forest, how could you be happy with me? The forest is my life." She had risen and looked reproachfully at him. "I do need you. I do depend on you. You do stand between me and trouble. Without you as my foreman, how could I manage?"

"It might be different; I might not hate it if it didn't stand between you and me."

"Then you don't hate it for any other reason? You are just jealous of it, Milt?"

"Perhaps I am!" he flared. "Perhaps I'm just crazy jealous of it as I am of every man who looks twice at you— Who's this Taylor?"

The girl lifted a hand in hopeless gesture and shook her head. "Milt, you make it so hard for yourself and for me. You know who he is, and you know why he's here."

"You didn't have to take him into your house."

"There was only one bunk left and there had to be a place to let Lucius sober up."

"He could have slept in mine"—surlily.

"I didn't know when he came that you would be away. And— Why, Milt, he wouldn't fit in the men's shanty! He was so out of place in his leather coat and his soft hands. He's big and strong, but after all he's only a little boy, and not the sort to be thrown with the rough crew we have now. He's a rich man's son who has never grown up, and you feel out of patience and sorry for him at the same time. Aren't you ashamed to let your jealousy make you silly?"

Evidently Milt Goddard was. He grumbled and complained, but in a few moments he went his way after talking about work to be done, though it was clear that his mind was yet on his frustrated love-making.

Above, John Taylor had heard through the grating in the floor. At first he had been amused, but when Helen Foraker spoke of him as an inconsequential youth who needed protection, a furious flush swept into his cheeks. It was still there when he descended to find the girl at her desk.

"Good-morning," she said, with a nod. "I took liberty with your affairs and sent Lucius back to Pancake. I've been planning to drive into the hardwood for the last week; I can make it to-day and from there I have to go into town, so you may ride with me."

"That wasn't necessary," he said coolly. "I had intended to spend the day there."

"I'm sorry— I didn't want the children to see Lucius. He is their uncle, their only living relative. Aunty May, who is responsible for them, doesn't like to have him around. I waited to explain. Aunty May called you for breakfast, but you didn't hear and the children were up, so I took the responsibility."

He looked at the clock. It was seven. Helen saw the query in his face.

"We eat at dawn," she explained. "I was up a trifle earlier to-day because I wanted to drive to Parker's."

The fact of having overslept coming on top of the rest made him feel, in truth, like a little boy.

He ate alone, served sourly by Aunty May, making the meal very short, and when he left the table Helen at once rose and reached for her jacket, indicating that she had been waiting for him.

They climbed to the single seat of the battered car and went north through her forest, crossing those cleared strips at regular intervals, through ranks of pine trees uniform in size, growing closely together.

THEY overtook Black Joe, and the car stopped while Helen talked briefly with him. He carried over one shoulder a long implement with a steel blade, a spud of some sort, and under one arm was a bundle of what looked at first to Taylor like pine twigs but from the other end protruded roots coated in wet clay. Infant trees ready to be planted, he told himself and, catching a word in the girl's talk, he knew those lanes which made a checker-board of the forest were fire-lines. The idea that this folly of Helen Foraker's was no casual happening took shape rapidly in his mind.

They left the forest, crossed plains, climbed a ridge and came into a hardwood slashing, with limbs and branches a tangle on the ground, cordwood stacked here and there and an occasional lonely and crippled sapling standing above the ruin. They dodged stumps and finally came to a stop.

"This is yours, isn't it?" she asked.

"Search me! I've never been here before; I was depending on finding White."

"Then you didn't even know he was gone?"

"Not until I got to Pancake."

She started to speak but checked herself and looked at him searchingly.

"Where's the railroad?" he asked.

"Railroad? Why, the right of way is over yonder a half-mile; the steel's been taken up."

"Taken up?"

"Didn't you know *that?*" she asked.

He shook his head. Her incredulous question seemed to take all the strength from him.

"I didn't know anything about this, it seems," he burst out. "You know and Lucius knew; Jim Harris knew, and my father's attorney in Detroit; my father himself knew and his secretary knew. I came up here to do the first piece of work I've ever tackled, so bull-headed and cock-sure of myself that my pride wouldn't let me ask questions of anybody!

"I'm on trial with my father. If I make good here I make good with him, and that means backing for whatever I may try to do in the future. I don't know what's wrong with these logs, but everybody else does know. It's my business and I'm not in the secret. Now I'm asking you, a stranger, to let me in."

He stopped as suddenly as he had begun. For a moment the girl eyed him, her whole interest awakened.

"Get out and I'll show you," she said almost curtly.

He followed her over tops, around piles of brush, to the brink of a sharp, deep ravine. The river could be heard murmuring not far off; a partridge whirred up from their feet and a squirrel scolded from a sapling. None of this did Taylor sense, nor was he conscious of the girl's eyes on him.

He saw only logs—logs by the hundreds, logs by the thousands; train-loads of logs; logs on end, logs upstanding, logs in a wonderful, hopeless tangle at the bottom of that ravine. To right and left the depression extended; to right and left went the logs; logs three feet in diameter, logs as small as six inches through. Logs, logs—logs—in a meaningless jumble.

He looked at the girl in bewilderment.

"Why— Why are they *here?*"

"It's been the talk of the country," she said. "White contracted with your father to cut this forty. He went at it the last thing and was paid for the scale on the decks. He was not to get his pay until the woods were clean, but the snow went with a rush; he knew it wouldn't let him haul them all to the railroad, so he dumped them here. The inspector who represented your father looked over the slash and found the woods clear. White got his money and cleared out. They started taking up the railroad two weeks before these were discovered. It's thirteen miles to the main line."

A wave of hot rage swept through Taylor's body, making his face dark. He knew then what the chuckling of his father had meant; he interpreted Rowe's smirk; he reasoned out Jim Harris's comments. He knew why Lucius and this girl had been surprised at his errand.

He laughed bitterly and drew a cigaret from his case with unsteady fingers, lighted it and broke the match savagely.

"He can have his logs!"—blowing smoke through his nostrils. "He can have his logs and let 'em rot for all of me! I'll find some other way to make my beginning!"

"A quicker way?" she asked, almost casually.

"Quicker—and easier."

"And what if these logs spoil?"

"Well, what of it?" he challenged. "What's that to me?"

"Nothing, perhaps—but maybe it should be." He eyed her closely, interest in what she was driving at overcoming for the moment his anger. "Were you in the army?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Excitement, and everybody was doing it."

"Nothing more?"

"Oh—it was up to me."

"Because we were all in trouble? Yes. We are all going to be in trouble before long again if people go on wasting logs and the opportunities to grow more logs." He shrugged his shoulders indifferently, but she did not appear to notice. "We have only a fifty-year cut of virgin timber left in this whole country. Trees are second only in importance to food. What are we going to do when they are gone?"

"Fifty years is a long time away."

"Europe was three thousand miles away."

"Say, what are you getting at?" he demanded.

"Two things: The first is that saving these logs is a necessary thing, not perhaps for you and for me, but for the country we live in. It's only three hundred thousand feet or so, but it's going to save just that much standing timber if it's made use of. And the next is that I have from my father a natural fear of waste—waste of material and waste of men and women." He removed his cigaret and flicked off the ash absently. "You admitted back in the car that you have never done anything you can point to. You're about twenty-five years old, aren't you? You have already commenced to go to waste——"

"I'm through, though! I'm——"

"You're dodging the first job because it is hard."

"No; because they tried to trick me."

"And if you give up they'll succeed." He arrested the cigaret on its way back to his lips. "Don't you see that? The laugh will be on you then. Maybe you'll do better in a small sense to give this up and try something else. Your father gave you these logs, I take it, because he thought you would fail. If you do fail, you're wasting an opportunity to show him, among other things, that his joke was cruel, aren't you?"

"I'll show him yet in some other way."

"But what about your pride?"

"Haven't any."

"Only a few minutes ago you told me that you hadn't asked about this open secret because you were too proud." He frowned, letting his eyes run over the ravine. "Isn't there something to what I say?"

A new emotion was stirring in young John Taylor. He was in a corner without argument. He was trying to slide around the obstacle directly in his path, looking for an easy way out—and he *was* proud. But in this hour he had become humble and more honest with himself than he had ever been before.

"There is a great deal," he said; "but what can I do? Here are the logs; the railroad is gone; they'll spoil before snow."

"Whatever is done must be done at once. Do you want to try to turn this joke on your father? And to do something hard and to be a pretty good American in peacetimes by saving this timber?"

"Will you show me the way?" he asked sharply.

She smiled and shook her head. "I don't know the way. I have an idea, but maybe it won't work. First, though, I want you to go to Pancake and put it up to the best logger you can find in town. If he has an idea, consider it; if he hasn't, maybe I can help."

He pulled the cigaret from its holder and dropped it to the ground. His face was flushed, lips parted in a smile of growing interest. The girl put out her foot and ground the ash of the cigaret to extinction. Then she lifted her face to him for answer.

John Taylor laughed shortly.

"As far as I can see, that's not unreasonable," he said. "Let's go!"

"WHO'S the best authority on timber around here?"

John Taylor, hanging over the desk in the Commercial House, put that question to Henry Wales, the proprietor.

"Humphrey Bryant," Wales said.

"Lumberman?"

"Nope. Editor of th' *Banner*. State senator since God knows when. But he knows logs."

"Reliable?"

"Well, yes. He ain't very pop'lar in his home town, got a lot of fool ideas about holdin' back th' country, but I guess his word's good."

At the little bank he was referred to the same man by the fussy little proprietor, and Jim Harris, who met him on the street, waved a hand toward the newspaper office and stated that Hump Bryant knew more about logs than Paul Bunion himself. Harris wanted to talk further, but Taylor broke away. He had a feeling that the man was defiled and, though he could detect no hardness behind the good humor, the words of the dying woman last night echoed in his ears and made him uneasy.

The office of the Blueberry *Banner* was a dingy, dusty, dark little place, smelling as all newspaper offices have smelled from time beyond reckoning. An unpainted partition divided the front from the back office, and it was plastered with newspaper clippings, many of them yellowed by age and dimmed by accumulated dust. A table in one corner was stacked high with a mixture of unopened mail, bundles of old papers and what not. Dusty files of the *Banner* bound in calfskin reposed on shelves; a picture of Lincoln hung askew over them, and on the opposite wall was a lithograph of Hazen S. Pingree.

At a cluttered desk sat an old man, a small, round, old man, who struck John at once as being the original for all the Santa Clauses who ever tooled a reindeer four-in-hand. He was writing, and as Taylor entered he looked up, put the thick lead of his pencil against the tip of his tongue and studied the newcomer abstractedly with his bright-blue eyes.

"Good-morning, Mr. Taylor," he said.

John smiled. "News travels quickly."

"Yes. There's little fresh in a weekly newspaper up here except the advertising and plate matter. Have a chair; make yourself comfortable."

"I suppose you, like every one else, know why I'm up here."

A pink tongue roved the lips behind the whiskers and the bright eyes studied Taylor's face again. He took off his glasses and swung one stubby leg slowly.

"Have you seen your father's logs?"

"I've seen the logs. They happen to be mine, though."

"Yours, eh? What are you going to do with 'em?"

"That's what I came here to ask you."

"Why to me?"

"Men in town tell me you know all there is to know about logging and I need expert advice."

The old editor wheezed a laugh.

"Meet any of my political enemies?"

"If I did, I didn't find it out."

"They're lax! Wait until fall an' election time and you'll hear what a scoundrel I am —hum-m-m— It's advice you're after, eh? Since you've come to me, then, I'll get personal right off. How much do those logs stand you in where they are?"

Taylor moved uneasily. "My pride, sir—all of it." The foot stopped swinging. "My father gave them to me for my start. He was quite sure that I would fall down. I'm inclined to think he wants me to."

The editor's eyes lost some of their brightness, and a profound sympathy and concern showed there.

"That's too bad, son. It's a heavy investment and the job's a tough one. Do you know anything about logging yourself?"

"Nothing. Except that with logs thirteen miles from a railroad, with snow gone, the owner is up against it."

A pause.

"To cut 'em up for chemical wood wouldn't get out what you've put into them. No—*anybody* could do that." The editor leaned back, locking his hands behind his head, and stared at the ceiling. "There isn't any possibility of trucking them out by team or tractor without eating up their value. I don't know of a portable mill that's available. By George, Taylor, I don't know!"

A MAN smeared with ink appeared from the back office and the editor excused himself. He had no more than disappeared when the outer door opened and Sim Burns entered. He did not recognize Taylor until he had approached the desk; then he flushed and sniffed.

"Mornin'," he said rather timidly. John nodded. Silence, while Burns shuffled. He cleared his throat. "I expect I owe you an apology, Mister Taylor," he said, with a servile whine in his voice.

"No; I don't think so."

This reassured the man, who said with more confidence: "All of us makes mistakes. I didn't know who you was or——"

Bryant reentered the room in time to interrupt Burns' attempt to ingratiate himself with the son of the rich Luke Taylor.

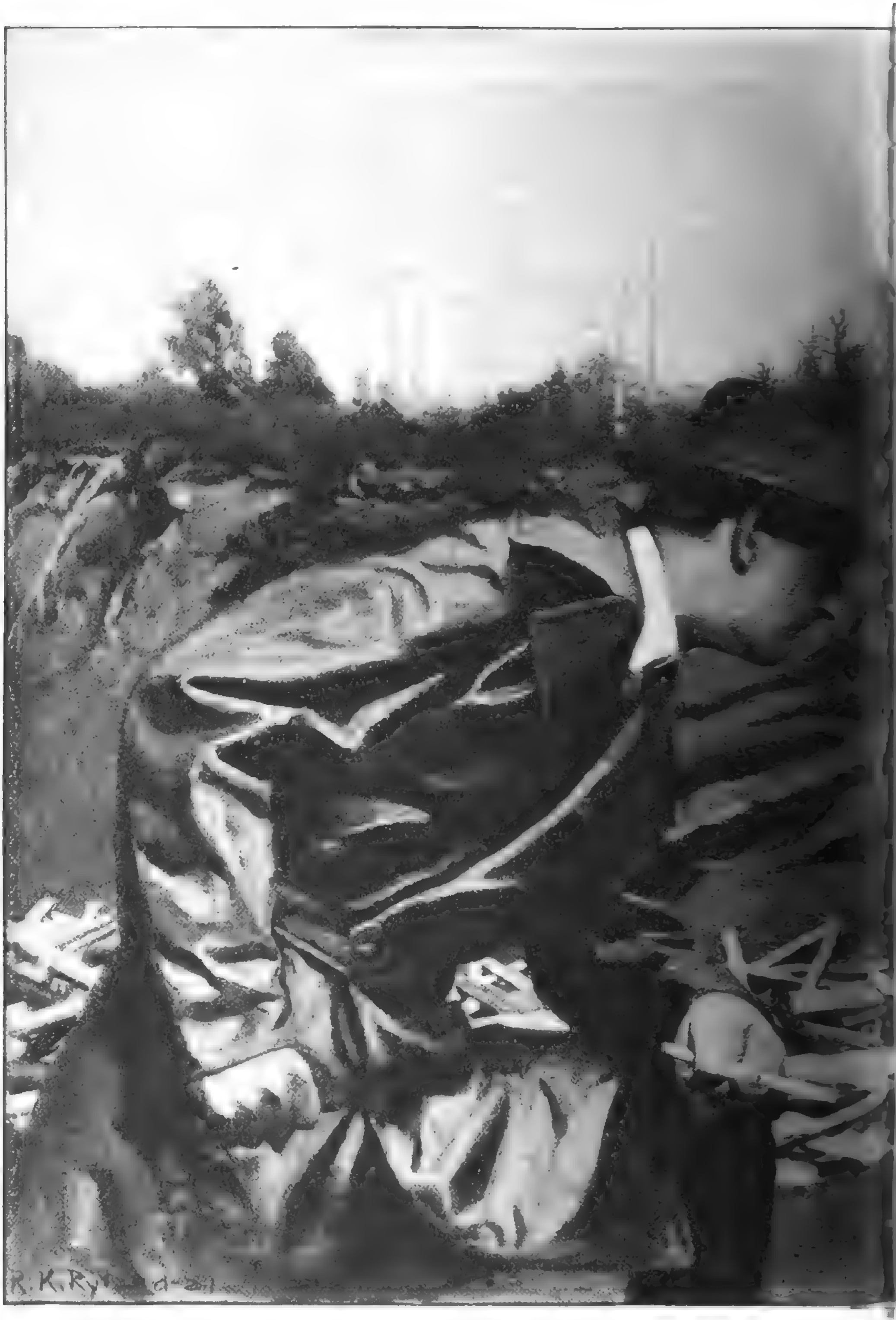
"Want to pay what I owe, Hump," he said, drawing out a purse. "It's two dollars."

"Just the price of a fifty-cent work-shirt," said the editor with a chuckle. Sim did not respond. "Is this an election bet, Sim, or a promise?"

"I don't notice you're spreadin' yourself on congratulations."

"No; and your hearing is excellent"—grimly.

"I knew what you was up to, Bryant!



"Whatever is done must be done at once," said Helen. "Do you want to try to turn this joke on
timber?" "Will you show me the way?" he asked sharply. She smiled

father? And to do something hard and to be a pretty good American in peace-times by saving this
shook her head. "I don't know the way. I have an idea, but maybe it won't work."

I knew you tried to get somebody to run ag'in me."

"Yes? They're all afraid of you up there, Sim. Your uncle was town boss so long he got 'em thinking it belongs to the Burns family."

"If we don't own it, we seem to be in charge."

"And more's the pity, Sim!"

The man turned to the door.

"Much obliged for the two-dollar plaster."

Slam! And a rattle of loose glass the only reply.

The old man laughed to himself and sat down, but he did not turn to Taylor at once. He watched Burns cross the street. A limp curtain in an upper front room of the Commercial House moved back and Jim Harris's face appeared. His hand beckoned to the new supervisor. Sim went into the hotel and up the stairs.

From a drawer Bryant took a worn notebook and opened it slowly. He glanced at the clock and on a fresh page wrote:

May 6, 1920.
11:09 A.M. . . . . Sim Burns.

He dropped the book and folded his hands across his stomach and looked at John very soberly. "Son, I'm up a tree and don't see a way down," he said.

The boy looked through the window again and the editor watched his profile carefully. For a moment they were so, and then he saw Taylor's expression change as a shade of hope filtered through its seriousness. Helen Foraker was coming across the muddy street.

"She"—gesturing—"sent me here," John said.

Helen entered and the men rose, the old editor bowing with a mixture of courtliness and paternal affection.

"Sit down, Helen," he said gently. "Mr. Taylor says you sent him to me."

"Indirectly. I asked him to locate Pancake's best logger. I knew who it would be, but I didn't want to send him to you because I didn't want to risk suspicion."

"Suspicion?"

She nodded.

"What have you told Mr. Taylor?"

She glanced at John, and Bryant said, "He brings a problem I can't solve."

"Give up?" The girl's eyes danced.

"Give up," said the other, bowing.

"And you?"

Taylor merely shrugged for reply.

"Then my proposal won't have much competition!"

The editor's fat leg stopped swinging.

"You mean you want to buy those logs?"

"No. I want to handle them, though, and maybe saw the lumber."

"Saw it?" The desk chair rocked forward with a wail of its old springs. "How in the world, Helen, are you going to get it to the mill? It's sixteen miles by way of the road and that means——"

"There is the river."

She looked at Taylor with that, and he quickly retorted:

"River? You can't float hardwood!"

IT WAS one of the few facts of logging on which he was sure, and he thought for the moment that his ignorance was being imposed upon, but she said:

"The ash, basswood and hemlock—except the butt logs—will float. You remember the cedar poles I cut two years ago"—turning to the editor—"and the water went down, and we were short-handed, and I left them banked? They're right at the mouth of the ravine. We can dog the maple and beech and birch to the hemlock and cedar, and raft it to my mill. It will be very simple."

She looked again at Taylor.

"I'll make you that proposition. I'll get the logs to my mill at the cost and twenty per cent., and if you think I'm going to trim you, you can hire somebody to watch.

"You can ship your logs by rail from the mill siding or I'll saw them, custom job—and you'd better let me saw them. There isn't any jack works to get them from the pond to the track, and your hardwood will begin deadheading in a hurry, so it ought to come out of the water as fast as it gets to the mill. Cars are hard to get right now and you might have to handle twice."

She turned to Bryant, who had watched closely. "I'll leave it to you, Humphrey, if that isn't fair enough for a salvage job. If he shipped to a mill, it'd be anyways a forty-mile rail-haul and I don't know as he could get it done that close. Besides, it'd add to the cost to handle them again at the pond. I don't think it's practical to get them out with a cross-haul or swing-boom and tackle."

Humphrey Bryant was rubbing a hand

vigorously over his beard, and the smile which made his eyes so bright ran out into a chuckle.

"My dear," he said to the girl, "there was at the first in you something of the Blessed Damosel; then came a strain of Joan of Arc; this morning I see qualities of Catherine of Russia!"

For two hours they discussed the job and John went out to walk and talk with Ezam Grainger, the banker, and finally he went back to the office of the *Banner* to sign the formal agreement. With no little temerity, true, because it was like putting his name to a blank check. Still, there was in the manner of Humphrey Bryant that which induced confidence and trust, and as for the girl, he was beginning to find her quite complex, and though he sensed the truth that she was a shrewd bargainer, he believed that those level brown eyes could conceal no crooked thought, that her fine voice would speak no untruth.

Helen and Bryant remained in the *Banner* office and John walked over to the Commercial House. The day seemed one of the brightest he had ever seen; the sense of inferiority that had been upon him earlier was gone, absorbed in a new sort of self-satisfaction.

To-day's decision meant money; not a great deal, perhaps, but money—and honest money. He wanted money now more than he had ever wanted it before; but after last night's experience out in Thad Parker's house, he was rather particular about how it should come to him.

He sat down in the dingy little office of the hotel and wrote at length to Marcia, telling her little of what had happened except that things were going well, exhausting his vocabulary in love-making.

While he wrote, Helen talked gravely to Humphrey Bryant. He listened, as gravely, to the story of the visit that Sim Burns had paid her, and when she finished he nodded.

"It begins to connect," he commented.

"With what?"

"To a movement that is on foot to build roads and more schools in the Harris Development district, that more gullible men and women may lay their hopes on the altar of his greed!" He looked down at his desk. "This is Jenny Parker's obituary, Helen." He paused. "Roads and schools cost money, and this is a poor county. The Thad Parkers can't build highways; Chief Pontiac Power won't; but Jim Harris needs improvements to swell his profits. Jim Harris was behind Sim Burns in his election. There's only one property left, politically unprotected, that can foot big bills."

Some of the color went from her face.

"And that is why they threaten to tax Foraker's Folly out of the county?"

"It looks that way. We can't fool ourselves on the direction of the wind."

The girl, hands lax in her lap, looked up. Then she said:

"I'm depending on you so! You're the only friend I have who can stand behind me—or before me. My father could teach me forestry, but in the game of trickery he was a child."

The old man rested a hand on her shoulder. "At the next session of the legislature," he said, "we may be able to make some headway in protecting you from our asinine laws. And until then I'll be with you from soup to—omega!"

Outside a man, loitering on the walk, started suddenly across the street. A curtain in that up-stairs front room of the hotel had moved slightly. The editor took the worn book from his desk drawer and wrote painstakingly:

11:57 A.M. Wes Hubbard.

THAT was the sixth of May.

On the morning of the seventh Milt Goddard and Helen Foraker were covering the country by car and telephone for teams and men. The slide which dragged logs by endless chain from river to mill was overhauled; the blacksmith in Pancake was at work early, making a quantity of chain-dogs, and a wagon-load of supplies went into White's abandoned camp, the nearest shelter to the ravine in which the logs had been abandoned.

That night Black Joe dragged out his turkey and brought to light his aged Grand Rapids driving-boots, unused but carefully preserved these many years. He greased them again and sharpened the spikes, handling the foot-gear with an odd excitement. The next morning he was on the stream early with dynamite, wire and his buzzer, and the heavy detonations of the explosive punctuated the day as he tore from their anchorage those snags which had impeded nothing but driftwood for a decade and more.

Three weeks later, for there were delays, the first raft, Old Joe ankle-deep but topside on the sluggish maple, swung to a stop against the boom at the mill and began crawling up one by one to the waiting bandsaw.

On a morning in mid-June, Luke Taylor sat in the library of his Detroit home, dictating to Philip Rowe. He spoke a phrase or a sentence at a time and looked with his hard old eyes out through the broad windows down the sweep of formal garden toward the river. His gaze did not go as far as the water, though; it was arrested half-way, not on the Grecian terrace of marble but on the trees that stood above it, bending their tops lightly in the breeze. They were white pines, planted there years ago despite the protests of the landscape architect who planned that garden; that group of trees was the only item that interested the man who had paid him his fee.

From the expression on the old man's face or from the tone of his voice the occasion might have been of little importance. A look at his secretary, however, would have indicated that this moment was of great consequence to some one; his hand holding the pencil trembled slightly in the waits and the veins on his forehead, close up under the sleek hair, stood out in knots.

Luke went on, "To my son, John Taylor—the sum of fifty dollars—weekly—so long as he may——"

A flush swept up over Rowe's forehead and a sharp gleam of triumph showed in his lowered eyes.

"And for the administrator—" Luke paused, working his mouth vigorously, and cast a glance at the head of the younger man bowed over his book. He did not know that Rowe's heart stopped, that a chill flashed down his limbs. This was the moment, the one he had plotted and planned—the moment when a new administrator would be named in a new will——

But before Luke could go on the door opened, a maid slipped in and dropped letters on the desk.

The intrusion distracted the old man, whose eyes rested on the mail. Rowe followed the girl's retreat from the room as though he could have harmed her for that break—and Luke was saying:

"What's in the mail, Rowe? Anything from——"

The other put his note-book down and ran through the letters.

"From McLellan—Internal Revenue office—Red Cross—here's one from Pancake."

"From John? He's written at last, eh? Read it!"

"You don't want to finish the matter of the will, then?"

"That can wait."

Rowe's fingers were unsteady as they tore open the envelope and rattled the creases from the paper. He read aloud:

> Dear Father: It has been over a month since I left you to take up this job and I have not written for two reasons. First, I have been very busy learning necessary things; second, I've had nothing definite to tell you——

Rowe paused, and his face lost color.

"Go on," said Luke.

> To-day, the first two cars of maple started rolling. They go to Bender of Detroit at $76 for No. 2. Common and better on track. The quality grades up to average. Hastily, John.
>
> P. S.—I'm well, happy and busy. Love to mother.

Rowe's eyes went back over the paragraphs and his brows contracted a bit. Old Luke was very still a moment; then he said:

"There's a trick somewhere. Call Bender!"

On the telephone Rowe got the head of the lumber firm.

"Mr. Bender, this is Rowe, Mr. Luke Taylor's secretary——"

"Bookkeeper! Bookkeeper!" mumbled Luke irritably.

"And I'm inquiring about lumber from Blueberry County . . . You did . . . Yes; Mr. John Taylor—you— Thank you, sir."

He turned to Luke.

"They bought, all right."

"At that price?"

"Yes, sir."

The old man wriggled as nearly erect as his back would permit and smote the floor a stout blow with his cane. "Sellin' the *lumber*, Rowe! Sellin' *lumber!* When McLellan had the best men he knows about on the job and they reported it was a dead loss!"

His words gave way to a spasm of wheezy laughter and he waved his cane.

"I don't understand it," snapped Rowe.

"Understand! Understand it? Why, damn it, it's as plain as a mole on a pretty girl's chin! Th' young buck's got something *in* him, Rowe! I thought he didn't. I tried to show him up—and by the Lord Harry, he's showin' *me* up! Showin' *us* up, Rowe!" He laughed again until he strangled for breath.

Rowe picked up his note-book and sat down. "Do you want to go on?" he asked.

"With the will? The will, eh?" Luke mumbled to himself and his blue eyes studied his secretary's face, then went out to that clump of pine. "No. No, Rowe. We won't go on with that to-day. Telephone McLellan I've changed my mind about changin' my will—for a few days—a few days. Here; take a letter!"

The smile in his eyes was brighter.

> JOHN TAYLOR, Esquire, Pancake, Mich.
>
> Yours of recent date received and contents noted. Your mother is well. Yours truly ——
>
> P. S.—Bender is making his cracks that he beat you on your first shipment. Watch the market and don't be a bigger fool than you can help.

He grinned. Rowe looked up sullenly at this statement, which had no foundation in fact.

"A line in time often gathers a lot of moss, Rowe," remarked Luke. "Now send his mother here. Hurry!"

CURLED on a *chaise longue* in her chintz-draped bedroom, Marcia Murray, too, read a letter from Pancake that afternoon, read with a mounting flush in her cheek and a light in her blue eyes that was not of good nature.

For a month, now, those letters had registered a cumulative change in John Taylor. He had gone away a cynical, *blasé*, conceited young man of the world; he was losing that cynicism and indifference; he was becoming as enthusiastic, as impulsive as a university sophomore, and as wrought up over his success as a normal twelve-year-old is over the capture of his first fish and game—and to Marcia Murray his rewards were about as significant.

In this letter he told of the sale of his first lumber and figured for her the approximate profit; he forecasted the grand total that his venture would yield, setting it off with underscoring and exclamation-points, but as the girl read her thin lip drew up in the suggestion of a curl. Where a month ago his letters had consisted of a dignified and assured love-making, they now chattered on about people who did not interest her at all: Humphrey Bryant, of whom John wrote as a firm friend; about a person named Black Joe—evidently *not* colored—who refused John his confidence, and about Helen Foraker, with a strange repression, an irregularity in the style which Marcia did not detect. She finished this letter:

> I'm awfully sorry, but it won't be possible for me to spend much time at the house-party at Dick Mason's lodge. You go, by all means, and I may be able to spend Sundays there. It's hard, Marcia, to give up that sort of thing, but I'm beginning to feel that my father wasn't so far wrong in thinking I didn't amount to much. The more I think of it the less I am inclined to ever ask a favor of him. This that I am making is all my own.

Her eyes lingered on that paragraph and her slender brows quirked; she glanced idly back over the letter, stopping again on the page where he forecasted his possible profits. She folded the paper and placed it in the envelope, and as she tossed it to her dressing-table there was something savage in the gesture and she sniffed disdainfully.

In the hall a telephone-bell jingled and she went to answer it.

"Hello . . . Oh, yes, Phil . . . No; not to-night, thank you . . . Oh, I've a headache—By the way, Phil, has Mr. Taylor heard from John? . . . He has? No . . . Yes . . . After all, you might take me out a while this evening—about nine? Good-by."

Looking at the reflection of her cool blue eyes as her cool, small hands worked in her golden hair, Marcia spoke again: "Of course, if he *should* please his— But he doesn't *want* the old crab's money!"

ON HELEN FORAKER'S suggestion, John had gone to live in the men's shanty with Milt Goddard, Black Joe and the balance of the crew that had not been shifted to the White camp.

It was not a congenial shelter for him. He was out of place, did not belong to the class of men with whom he ate and slept, and his reputation as a "mixer" in that other existence he had lived did him no good here. More, Goddard was surly and gruff, as his deeply rooted jealousy prompted. Black Joe ignored John and would respond to none of his advances.

After their agreement was signed, Taylor had nothing of a personal nature in common with Helen Foraker. Their exchanges of conversation were all brief and wholly concerned with, the work and much of her talk was as Greek to Taylor.

He watched the girl closely, with a growing humility, which, strangely, he did not resent. He saw her, those first days, among the men in the ravine where teams snaked the logs from their jumble to the river's edge, where they were caught in a boom and dogged into rafts. She was sparing of words, untiring, always alert, and she knew what was going on. He heard her challenge the method of a teamster whose horses were stuck when the log they skidded jammed between two great stumps.

"Back now, and swing in gee," she said sharply. "Don't yell at them! You've got your team up in the air. Try it again. Haw, now!"

The log was obstinate, the teamster flushing as others looked on to see her directions sting his pride.

"If you don't like my way, why don't you try it yourself?" he asked.

She dropped from the log on which she stood, took the reins from him, tried and failed; let the team rest, rubbed their noses, eased the collars, and started them again. They strained together, skin wrinkling over their broad rumps; they grunted, swung, and the log started forward.

"Now you take them," she said, returning the lines. "You'll go farther with a low voice."

She had been right. The man grinned himself because he had been wrong and shown up fairly.

Taylor saw her rebuke a youth for carelessly driving in the dog-wedge.

"That won't hold," she said, kicking the wedge with her boot-toe. "If that raft goes to pieces and that one log deadheads, we lose as much as we're paying you for a day's work. Knock it out and put it in right!"

The boy did. In the vernacular of the men, she got away with it; and because she knew and was sure she knew.

Another item: Taylor heard men on the job scoffing at the idea of timber as a crop; in Pancake he saw others grin and mutter to one another as Helen passed, and knew that the girl was aware that she was being laughed at derisively. Her manner on such occasions was striking; the men of his company would have given her the blanket characterization of the army and said that she was hard-boiled; his mother would have said that she carried a chip on her shoulder; Taylor himself thought her defiance splendid. She could not divorce herself from her forest; when men belittled it and the idea behind it, it was as though they had made uncouth fun of her. To be a friend of the girl required that friendship for her pine be made evident; to be outside her favor it was necessary only to show no charity for the work her father had started. Nothing else seemed to influence her to any extent.

Such things he saw, and others. Saw her jump lightly from log to log as she went over the face of that tangle, poised like a splendid animal, lithe and alive and as sure of her body as she was of her mind. He watched her cross the river, leaving behind a rank of logs which rose sluggishly from the immersion her weight gave them, but she reached the boom of high-riding cedars without wetting her stout boots. And he saw her in a canoe, driving the light craft up-stream, arms and shoulders and torso working with a rhythm which set his heart in faster measure.

HE HAD been at the mill one morning and was walking through the forest to the skidway. At the house Black Joe came from the woods and hardly grunted in return to John's salutation. But after Taylor had passed he heard the man hail him.

Turning about he saw Aunty May standing in the kitchen door. They were within ear-shot of the woman, but Joe said: "Say, tell her Miss Helen won't be down for dinner. She wants to know if Hump Bryant's telephoned."

Taylor repressed a smile at this strange proceedure which he had witnessed on several occasions, and repeated the information and the question.

"Tell him," said Aunty May, "that there ain't been a 'phone-call all forenoon."

Gravely Taylor passed along that message and then, as the woman turned into the house and Joe went on, he resumed his way.

A childish shout from below checked him on the high bank and he looked down to see Bobby and Bessy in the baby-trap. That was what all Foraker's Folly called the small, dry sand-bar, separated from the bank by a dozen feet of shallow water and reached by a small foot-bridge made of stakes driven firmly in and planks laid along them. Every fair morning Aunty May shooed her charges across this bridge and then drew the planks to shore, thereby isolating the children on their sand-bar and leaving her wholly free for the housework.

The peril of water was deeply planted in their hearts and they never attempted the easy wade to shore.

HOWEVER, playing in the clean sand grew monotonous, and though the children never openly protested, they were full of excuses to delay their isolation, full of enthusiasm when released and ever on the watch for some passer who might be waylaid and induced to talk. Benny, seeing Taylor, had halted him without excuse, but when John stopped, the youngster pointed toward shore and cried:

"Look! Looky!"

"At what?"

"There! Somepin'."

"A kic-kic," said Bessy.

Benny grinned.

"She means a cricket. That's what it is. I fought it was somepin' worse."

Taylor smiled, seeing the ruse, commented casually and started on.

"Did you see Black Joe?" Benny was standing on the shore side of the bar now, toes almost in the water, and Bessy was beside him, finger in her mouth, wide-eyed in expectancy at this game she knew so well.

"Yes; I saw Joe. Why?"

"Oh—we seen—*saw*—him, too."

Bessy waved a hand at the river.

"We see wog go by-by!" she trebled.

Her brother smiled and straightened her sunbonnet.

"She says, we watch the logs go past," he interpreted. "She don't talk very plain."

Pause. Benny broke it hastily, for pauses were dangerous.

"Did you see Aunty May? Was she all right?"

Taylor laughed heartily and said that Aunty May had appeared in good health, and squatted on the brink. This change, forecasting a visit, made Benny grin.

"Aunty May says you need a—a—a— Now, you know what Grandpa Humpy Bryant is?"

"An editor?"

"Nope. What he is for Bessy an' me."

"He's your guardian, isn't——"

Taylor had interrupted himself, but Benny took no notice of his queer smile.

"That's what!" he cried. "Garden! Aunty May says you need one."

"Oh, so Aunty May says I need a guardian?"

"Uh-huh. She says so."

"What do you think, Benny?"

Thus confronted with a question, the nature of which was beyond him, the boy was embarrassed. "I don't fink," he said, and laughed. Then, losing his self-consciousness, "I'm like what Aunty May says Aunt Helen is: I don't say somepin' unless I fink somepin'."

"And does Aunt Helen think I need a guardian?"

"I guess she don't fink. She don't say an' she don't fink somepin' unless she say somepin'. An' when she finks she says. That's what Aunty May says. She only finks about somepin' 'portant, Aunty May says."

"And then, likely, I'm not very important, Benny?"

Again the child was beyond his depth and twisted his fingers.

"Milt, he finks 'bout you. He says to Aunt Helen you're a damn dude."

Taylor sat down on the bank, dangling his legs into the yellow sand.

"So Milt says I'm a dude, does he?"

Benny nodded eagerly. Here was something he could follow; and this was becoming a deliciously long interruption to the morning's captivity. "He says that to Aunt Helen two, free days ago. He says you a—dude, an' you don't know what's goin' on wif your logs an' you let a woman make money for you. That's what Milt says."

"Waf-wog! Waf-wog!" shrilled Bessy, as a raft rounded the far bend.

The children discarded Taylor, who had served his purpose with them for that day. He rose and went on, and they did not even turn to wave farewell.

"So I need a guardian—and I'm a damned dude—and I don't know what's going on with my logs—and I'm letting a woman make money for me!"

He looked up through the pines and laughed ruefully.

"I'll be darned if I don't have to plead guilty on two counts!" he said. "And—I'm not sure of the others."

Later he added: "And she always says what she thinks, and she doesn't say anything about me. Therefore"— making the mathematical symbol of deduction in the air with a forefinger—"she doesn't think about me at all."

IT WAS that evening. Helen Foraker was at her desk and looked up with a degree of surprise as Taylor entered, for it was the first time he had been in her house since their business agreement.

"Did you ever stop to think," he began without preface, "that I don't know much about what's going on?"

She sat back in her chair.

"I've been wondering if you'd wake up," she said quietly.

"Wondering! I didn't suppose you took time to think about me."

She traced a line on the blotter before her with a dry pen. "I've had lots of time to think about you, John Taylor. A lot of time to wonder about you—and not enough time to make up my mind. I've never known many kinds of people; I've never known any one like you. I thought I sized you up the first time I saw you, and I haven't had much evidence to change my opinion. Women are supposed to have a certain keen intuition; perhaps we have; perhaps that has kept me wondering if you wouldn't wake up. Sit down."

He took a chair and she folded her arms, looking squarely at him.

"Most people I have knowr don't wonder about themselves and so they don't understand themselves. That morning when we went to look at your logs you told me more about yourself than any—stranger ever has. What you said backed up my first impression, but because you said it made me suspect that something had given you a jolt. Ever since I've been wondering if you'd be content to hang around the edges and let circumstances make a boomerang of your father's trick."

She stopped and Taylor smiled gravely. "Circumstances?" he asked. "You mean you've wondered if I'd be content to ride into my father's good opinion on your shoulders?"

She protested, but he rose abruptly from his chair. "Yes, it is you!" he cried, suddenly excited. "What chance I have of making a little success here is because that drunken boy gave me the wrong turn at Seven Mile and sent me in here to spend the first night under your roof.

"And it's you who have made me want to wake up. You took me with you to Thad Parker's that night, and I looked death in the face and caught a glimpse of life." His voice was low and growing tense. "The next day you talked to me about waste and duty and Americanism in the terms of saw-logs, and made it morec onvincing than any flag-waving I've ever listened to. I've watched you dominate men who won't even accept me as a companion. I've watched you do things that to you are every-day accomplishments which are away beyond me.

"Just being here has got under my skin! I'm thrown against a girl who is doing things for herself and for me. You're making money for me; you're winning my father's favor for me, and I don't like it!"

He paused, breathing rapidly, and saw a glow in the girl's eyes that had never been there before when she looked at him, a vague light of admiration, and his heart leaped.

"My mind should be good for a little something—Lord knows it's had preparation and rest enough! I have a stout back and strong hands"—spreading his big, white palms. "I want to do things for myself; I want to make my own money, to win my father's good opinion——"

He stopped abruptly and let his hands fall limply to his sides. Then he asked very simply,

"Will you teach me?"

In such a manner the John Taylor who had come to the Blueberry to humor his father that he might win wealth without soiling his great hands, and who had first learned that there is some money from which fair-minded men recoil, reached the understanding that the reward is only one factor in achievement; in such a manner the John Taylor who had been self-assured and self-satisfied and superficial humbled himself; yet in that deference was nothing servile, but rather it had the nobility of simplicity and frankness; in such a manner the man who had set out to find material things which would make one woman happy came to another woman to find that peace which can come only with respect of self.

Helen's hands dropped to her chair-arms and a happy flush spread over her cheeks.

"I will teach you all I can, John Taylor," she said.

Like an ambitious boy on his first job he sat that night while she sketched for him the rudiments of what he must learn before he could know what was being done for him. There was talk of Scribner rule and Doyle rule, allowance for defect, mill overrun, of costs and markets; of lumber grades and transportation; of felling and bucking and swamping; of circular and band-saws and kerf; of those fundamentals which he had hoped to skip in any business; talk of the grubbing he had loathed, and this night he did not shy from it, but questioned and listened and remembered.

IT WAS late when he rose. Helen followed him to the door and stood on the threshold looking out into the spring night.

Taylor gazed up at the girl. Her arm, resting against the casing, was very delicate in line; but silhouetted against the light it seemed then like a part of some competent, dexterous machine; her face was mostly in shadow, but where the lamp glow fell on one cheek was an impression of softness, of gentleness, strong in its call to his senses. She was talking, but he was unconscious of her words—just heedful of the musical timbre of her voice.

His breath caught, and a strange creep went over his skin. For the first time she was for him a woman, a female; she had been an antagonist, an example—and now she was a girl wholly different from any he had ever known, capable, far-sighted, keen of mind—and most lovely!

He walked slowly toward the men's shanty. Pauguk muttered savagely from her kennel as she caught his scent. Manifestations of the appeal which had emanated from Helen went as quickly as they had come, but they left him unsteadied.

He entered the bunk-building, where a light still burned. Goddard was mending a horse-collar and looked up and his gray eyes lighted unpleasantly, but he did not speak. Taylor brought out pen and paper and sat at the table beneath the hanging oil-lamp to write to Marcia Murray. For a long interval he was there; a dozen times he started forward and touched the page with his pen, but no mark was made.

He did not *want* to write to Marcia Murray. He could not share with her this new enthusiasm for the job that he was to do with his own mind, his own back, his own hands. For this night she had no part in his life; for the first time in months he went through those last moments before turning in without remembering the sound of her voice, the feel of her breath on his cheek, the touch of her cool fingers, the steady look in her clear eyes.

Something had come into his heart which left no place for little Marcia—Marcia, the girl for whom he had braved his father's vitriolic scorn, for whom he had come on this distasteful errand!

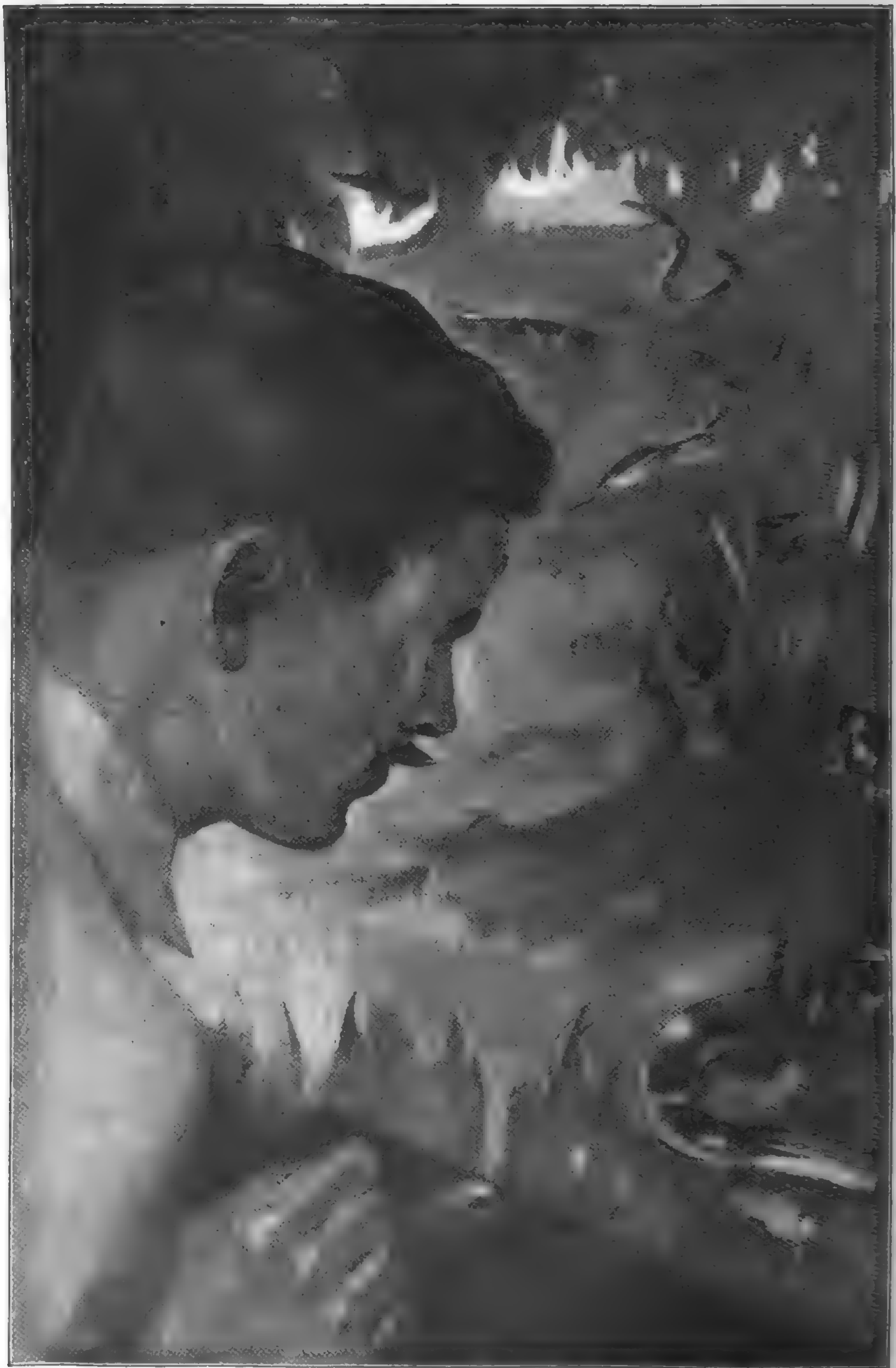
The others had gone to their blankets; he rose, blew out the lamp and went to the door. A light was extinguished in Helen Foraker's room. He saw an indistinct figure appear at the window and draw back the curtains and linger a moment and disappear—and again that delicious creep went over his body.

Very quietly, as though awed by some soul-molding experience, Taylor turned back to his bunk; the stimulus did not leave him; he tossed restlessly, eyes open or sleeping in brief snatches until dawn; he rose in the new day to a new manner of living, of thinking, to work with Helen Foraker's men and his logs, to talk markets with Humphrey Bryant, to sit evenings with the girl and talk timber and labor and board-feet and now and then be unable to hear even his own words because of the blood that the beauty of her face sent crowding into his ears.

And so it was that he could write to his father that June evening and tell briefly that he had turned the stone to bread, and that his letters to Marcia Murray from thenceforth were not impelled by the urge which made the grouse beat his wings through the night, but were concerned with men and the deeds of commerce!

The next instalment of this absorbing out-of-doors novel tells of new dangers that threaten Foraker's Folly, and will appear in January EVERYBODY'S—out December 15th.

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921



The whole stifling, stilly gloom was filled with a *hiss-s-s-s*—long, venomous, beastly.

Seba Dines

A Jungle Story that May Contain a Lesson for Humankind

By F. St. Mars

Illustration by H. Palmer

SEBA began life as an egg, about the size of a hen's egg, one of forty-eight, and white, too; but he had no shell—only leather to cover him. His mamma wrapped herself round him and the others, because she had no fur or feathers or legs, only tiny bumps where, in ages past, the legs of her ancestors had once been.

Some people think they are hard done by if they go without a meal for three hours, and some if they feed not for twelve. The last time Seba, the python, fed was in 1920! And at the moment we intrude upon his wicked meditations over the fall of man—or whatever evil it was he did meditate upon—he was just about to proceed to hunt up his dinner for 1921.

Thus you have him in the pool, with only his nose above water.

Seba had that moment awakened from a forty-hour nap. He had been waiting in that pool for days, building on the hope that some foolish folk would come to drink. None did. They went to the other pool, and if you had been there, and had not held your nose, you would have understood why.

At last Seba decided that if the disobliging dinner would not come to him, he must go to it. He began to get a move on.

First, his malignant flat head got going; then his neck; then the front part of his great body, growing fatter and fatter as it appeared foot by horrible foot, all glistening and creepy, tesselated with colors.

Then the middle of him—thick as the thigh of a big man—began to uncoil. Then his latter end, getting narrower to his tail. At last, all of him was moving at once, flat, legless, with long ripples under the silver-painted skin, crawling, crawling, crawling—twenty-one and a half feet of he python reeling off his mile-an-hour traveling-gait—not undulating, as the books picture him, but simply sliding, sliding, *flat*, like a moving staircase. Ough!

The bateleur eagle—fine name, fine bird; black, with coral face, beak and legs—came down from the thousand-foot level, guided by thousand-foot-range eyes, as bateleur eagles do come down—*swish!*

The devil who told Seba's dim ancestor more than was good about apple trees may have given Seba the power to hear that swish in the air. He certainly could hear a tiptoe upon earth. Still more certainly, he had the power to feel the eagle's talons in his tail—it was the sort of hand-shake that none could ignore.

The moment the bateleur dug in was the moment Seba chose to turn his latter end into an electrified flail. The eagle went with the tail, having no time to apologize for mistaking the tail, seen momentarily in the grass, for the whole snake.

After the tail had nearly brained an amazed jackal, cleared a five-yard swath of five-foot tinder, misnamed grass, nearly brought down a young tree, and quite brought down—with the jar—a most impolite green monkey sitting in that tree, the tail stopped, and Aquila, the king of birds, let go with humiliating haste.

Seba proceeded as before.

That proved he was a snake, servant of the Evil One. Nothing else could have resisted showing some emotion or feeling. Seba continued, as before, like a machine, one mile per hour, flat, staring, cold as ice.

His presence, revealed by his own actions, would be followed—marked. A hundred eyes, mostly unseen, were watching his glistening length; only respect for the eagle kept them quiet—temporarily.

First it was a black-backed jackal, lean, intelligent and alert. If Seba had been half his length, that jackal might have risked a fight; as it was, he risked nothing—only followed disconcertingly.

Next it was a quick-eyed green monkey with a quicker temper. His screams of abuse evolved green monkeys apparently out of thin air, and they were worse than the jackal. They followed overhead, hurling down imprecations and other things, shaking branches, and grimacing in rage.

Next it was a pair of mops doing duty as birds called louries that came and postured above and in his wake. But finally it was a serval cat, lean, lithe, very leggy, and spitting!

Seba spat, too, raising his head, opening wide his nasty gape, and whipping in and out his forked tongue. Seen thus, he was the personification of fearfulness. The big spotted cat faded backward into the thorn-bushes—even as *Alice's* Cheshire cat faded—and Seba glided on.

THEN, quite suddenly, all movement fell from him, and he lay like a great wire cable — motionless. Nothing moved all around; even the monkeys were still. Night was driving back the day. No sound broke the all-engulfing silence except the booming of a cock ostrich, like a war-drum, far away—that and the strident *ping-g-g* of the mosquitoes seemed to have the world to themselves. There appeared to be a suggestion of calamity in the air, a feeling of waiting. All the bush held its breath.

Something like a rope slid down from the branch of a wild fig tree about ten yards away—there was a flicker of tawny yellow among the thorns. Then a scream, vibrant with fear, but still more with hate. The serval cat was in the toils of a python, who, wrapping her in its folds, was endeavoring to crush out her life before she tore out the python's life first. But the python was not Seba—that monstrous evil had not moved.

The serval was yelling for help, and she needed it!

Came then a rustle in the bush behind. Something flashed out. A form tore over Seba, prostrate to earth, and Seba, with head coiled back, writhed and hissed. The something took one leap, with legs well tucked up, off Seba—whom it could not, till that moment, have seen—onto the other python. Here it revealed itself as another serval cat, mate to the first, a living firework, tearing, biting and spitting with mad fury.

Then things happened!

The other python unwrapped with speed and hit out.

Then, with inconceivable quickness, first one serval came back, then the other—straight at Seba. The giant, with head coiled back, let his head go. It shot forward like a released stone from a sling. and hit the first serval amidships, with tightly shut mouth. One could distinctly hear the breath of the cat whistle out, and see the animal crash, lifted off its feet, into a thicket.

The second cat arrived, horrified, and spread-eagled upon the python that it had not seen—and Seba showed what writhing could be. He laid waste that place with his threshings. Something had to go, and, although she had stuck like a bur, the serval cat went sailing through the air, exploding curses *en route*, hurled into space.

Seba lay for a quarter of an hour as if nothing had happened, then slid deliberately to the place where the other python had been. One presumes that he sniffed; certainly he became aware that it was a female. He showed some faint shadow of excitement for the first time; his head began waving and searching hither and yon; but he could not find her.

Then another scaly head came waving into the arena. Another python! The two, being so very low to earth, did not see one another till quite close. Then—they lay still and stared! Both were males, seeking the same bride; but they might have been rope of brightly tinted plaited wire for all the expression they had. And—a third python glided slowly into view, a male also, and stopped, staring, cold, inexpressive, soulless and repellent.

An hour passed, during which the sun moldered and went out. A lion crept about in the shadow till it nearly stepped upon one of the pythons' tails. Then it went away—in a hurry—followed by the hissing maledictions of all three. An old boar wart-hog approached, grunting and rooting, but stopped when he heard that long-drawn hated warning, and removed itself in the opposite direction.

Then, very slowly, Seba got his ponderous length on the move. He struck off on the scent of the she serpent, and gradually, one after the other, taking their time, the other two got under way in his wake. As they did so, a fourth male python crawled from the grass and fell in at the rear.

Three natives, late from some village feast, came running along the path. These pythons—as all snakes—liked to follow the paths of game, of man. There was a hiss, a yell, a flash of steel, and the natives were running back again faster than they had come.

Apparently the path of the fair coiler, if one may so speak of her who "led" those legless gallants "on," was a path of thorns. Snakes are very careful what they touch, and this one had managed to evade the barbed straight spikes, short, long, hooked, recurved—but she had not managed to avoid other things. Once she had dragged over an ants' covered way, and gone mad at the jaws of the ant army that swarmed out of the crushed gallery. Seba got, as it were, the reflex action of that, and lashed around so tremendously—the bites of those big-jawed soldier-ants are no small matter—that he fouled a party of bush-pigs digging for a living. The resulting rush—sharp hoofs cut almost as deeply as sharp tusks—completely upset the calm of the other pythons, and chaos ensued.

Seba could follow her whom he hoped to make his bride by scent alone—but that was the only easy thing about that trail. It took him into a porcupine's hole, and Seba backed out very much faster than he went in.

Anon they came to a place where the she python had bathed in a pool. What had happened when the lone bull hippopotamus—he owned that bit of water—went for her, they could not tell. The aftermath was enough when the three-ton bull ran at Seba with his mouth open. The python, who feared above all things to be trodden upon, recoiled upon his rivals, and the resulting mix-up was terrible.

Then it pleased that evil she thing to visit surreptitiously the abode of man, and, of course, Seba and the rest (that procession had increased to seven now) followed.

A shadow that came round the corner of the district-commissioner's fowl-house and saw them, doubled up and fled. *That* was a jackal; but it was certainly no jackal that scurried out of the veranda and almost ran into Seba's flat, villainous head. It dropped the zebra skin it was carrying, and skidded sideways for dear life—a hyena, most like.

Then the rat. It ran clean over Seba, and died with one piercing squeal in the next python's jaws. And behind the rat, came the cat—a tom-cat. He could not stop his rush, but he could change its direction—he threw a neat back somersault and continued at full speed the opposite way. The python proceeded to swallow the rat. This, like most things that pythons do, took time, and the others left him, while they proceeded upon the trail.

IT LED straight to the fowl-house, as if the snake had been there before. Perhaps it had; one never can tell with serpents. Anyway, it went there now, and there had been fowls in that house before it came—not after. Seba and his fellows found twenty and one corpses, but nothing alive. Apparently the fair damsel of the forked tongue had slain the lot, but had not otherwise touched one. Why? To see if any of those fowls had eggs beneath it, I suppose.

But the trail that led into the fowl-house by a small hole—Seba's *embonpoint* stuck fast in that hole for a space, and his writhings threatened to bring the whole fowl-house down in heaps—did not lead out of it through that hole or any other. It went as far as the door, and the door was *open*. Thenceforward it was no longer on the ground but in the air; no longer strong and unmistakable, but faint—and there was the scent of man mixed with it.

Seba ought to have shown surprise, or, at least, suspicion—flying snakes not being in the Scheme of Things now, thank goodness! But snakes never show anything except hate, and Seba dragged his great length on doggedly.

He had lost his position as leader of that Indian file of unholy ones. Some of the others had worked round the fowl-house and picked up the trail on the far side. It led to the commissioner's bungalow.

The first warning the inhabitants were vouchsafed of the coming of the pythons, came from the old she cat. She came racing up to the veranda from the garden, where she had been hunting rats, seized one of her kittens, lying in a basket there, by the scruff of the neck and raced off again with it. In less than a minute she was back again, to grab another kitten and tear away as before. Fortunately the python's cruising speed is very slow; but even so, those on the veranda distinctly heard the cat spit suddenly somewhere out in the dark as she got away with the last kitten.

That ought to have warned them, if anything could. It did not, however, any more than the actions of the cat herself, who had hidden each of her kittens under a stone, and far apart—a significant enough maneuver, in all truth.

The first male python, a bad dream of some fifteen feet, crawled slowly up the steps onto the veranda—an eighteen-footer following.

There were three men on the veranda, the commissioner and two black servants, and their backs were bent over a sack, which appeared to be inhabited by an evil spirit. The commissioner was new and very pink—a recent importation from home.

By chance, it may be—or perhaps it was some instinctive feeling—one of the black servants looked round. He was still bending, and viewed the world from no great height. He did not move at all for a space, but the moon showed that his face had turned gray under his skin. So still was the man that his fellow glanced over his shoulder, and—froze where he stood.

The commissioner cursed them both for lumps of brick-dust, and glanced round, too. Then his jaw fell, and he stood up very straight indeed. He did not say anything much that could be heard. The snakes did that. The whole stifling, stilly gloom was filled with a *hiss-s-s-s*—long, venomous, beastly, and the view, as seen by those three human beings, was of a mouth open to the widest extent any mouth could ever be opened to, of a forked tongue that whipped incessantly, of eyes that glittered unspeakable things—waving high in air above fifteen feet of glistening coils of snake.

The restless inquisitiveness of the white man led the commissioner to look beyond that head, and he beheld another waving, wide-jawed, above eighteen feet of snake; beyond that was a third head, enormous, hissing over twenty-one and a half feet of glistening Seba. There were others too, but the commissioner moved at that point and broke the spell.

The two black servants fetched out a yell fit to awaken the dead, and fled. The commissioner suddenly remembered that he had "left his pipe" inside the bungalow, and went to get it in a hurry.

The sack buck-jumped for a space, as if inhabited by a small volcano, then fell flat, and the she python crawled, cool, calm, malevolent, out into the moonlight.

What happened then, the commissioner has never been induced to say. Perhaps he did not look out to see.

AS THE dawn unbarred the gates of day, and let in the sun, all triumphant, flaming and splendid; as the bush danced with a thousand flashes of rainbow jewels; as the herds shook off the fear of night, and began to file down to the drinking-places, a pair of tawny-red duiker antelopes, not twice the size of hares, came gracefully stepping through the bush.

Suddenly a monkey, sitting above, yelled out wildly in alarm; the buck duiker spun like a top upon his dainty heel, and, with a whistle-snort, executed one quick bound—but he was too late. Something, glistening like a cable of painted wire, shot along the ground and tripped him. He fell sideways, recovered like lightning, but was jerked down again. Fold upon fold of shining, tesselated, scaly body flung itself upon him, round him, all over him. It was Seba making his "kill" at last.

Close by, a sudden piteous scream denoted that Seba's new mate, striking down the doe duiker, was making her "kill" also.

And there, coiled, gorged, helpless, and asleep, the other rope discovered them—that most terrible rope of all, red, alive, slow, winding through the bush—the dreaded driver-ants, the scourge and terror of the wild, the savage, huge-jawed nomadic ants who march through the wilderness in columns millions strong and hundreds of yards long. Too full to get away, the giant serpents were covered with ants almost before they knew. Nor did their tremendous lashings avail them. Thousands upon thousands of the attackers were killed, but it made no difference. The ants won in the end—as they always do.

Introducing a New Idea in Fiction—

The Phantom Auto

Beginning the Amazing Adventures of Doctor Goodrich, Detective of the Future, Whose Startling Achievements Are Accomplished by Practical Application of Newly Discovered Methods in Science. A Complete Novel—

By Stoddard Goodhue

Illustrations by E. J. Dinsmore

DR. DANIEL GOODRICH has been so much before the public in the capacity of criminologist, so much has been heard of his wizardlike exploits in the application of scientific knowledge that have led to the apprehension of many major criminals, that the public has come to think of the distinguished medical examiner as a sort of mechanical sleuth and very little of a real human being.

Yet those who are privileged to become intimate with Dr. Goodrich are aware that his true personality is as different from the popular conception as it well could be.

I recently spent a week-end with Dr. Goodrich at his country place at Roxbury, Connecticut—a farm in the foot-hills of the Berkshires to which he has given the characteristic and alluring name of "Three Brooks." There I had opportunity to see the distinguished criminologist in his moments of relaxation and gained not only new understanding of the equipment of mind and body that makes possible for him the feats of scientific sleuthing with which his name has so long been associated but also a fuller comprehension of his warm-blooded, sympathetic emotional nature.

I mention the visit to Three Brooks because it was on the way back to New York that an incident took place which served to introduce me to a case which Dr. Goodrich had undertaken to solve. The incident was of such a seemingly trivial nature that I hardly paid it the attention of more than a passing thought, little thinking that it was a manifestation of a plot so fiendishly conceived, and concealed with such masterly cunning, that to the normal mind nothing happened which could not be accounted for by the most simple explanation.

We were motoring back to the city and met an automobile near New Milford, driven by a man who was accompanied by a woman. Both cars were moving slowly at the time, being near a sharp turn, and we had a good view of the occupants of the other car, which was painted red.

I especially noticed the driver, because of a certain keenness of glance with which his black eyes flashed at me as we passed. He was of foreign aspect and wore a closely cropped beard.

Dr. Goodrich, on the other hand, had chiefly noticed the woman, and he commented after we passed:

"I certainly thought at first that the woman in that car was Katherine Mayten. I was about to call out to her; but I saw that she had black hair. Mrs. Mayten, as you know, has light-brown hair. But there certainly was a striking resemblance."

A few minutes later we drove down Turkey Hill into the town of New Milford. We stopped a moment at the station to pick up Mazie Marshall and Miriam Cooper, two young women who are officially associated with the medical examiner in the detective service. The young women had been in New Milford ostensibly for a week-end outing, but in reality on official business, and Dr. Goodrich was eager to hear what they had to report.

“Well, girls, how was the fishing in New Milford?”

Mazie Marshall acted as spokesman.

“Pretty good,” she replied. “We got quite a bit of information out of a young woman we met casually at the Squirrel Inn. It seems that Gustave Beuscher and his wife come there now and again; and that sometimes Gustave has been there with another woman whose description would answer pretty well for Katherine Mayten except that she is said to have very black hair, and sometimes this same young woman is there with another man who is described as tall, of athletic build, with gray hair, although he doesn't appear more than thirty-five or so, and with dark closely cropped beard and remarkable black eyes.”

Dr. Goodrich was eagerly attentive.

“And what about the black-haired young woman?” he asked.

“She certainly looked like Katherine Mayten—a dead ringer for her in size, figure and features, but of course Katherine is very blond. If it were Katherine, she exhibited marvelous nerve; for we passed within ten feet of her, and she looked right at us without seeing us.”

“Katherine's nerve, so far as that goes, has never been questioned, I believe,” said the physician dryly.

Then, after further thought, he added: “However, it doesn't seem possible that it could be Katherine; for she and her husband are giving a little party to-night at their home down in Bay Shore, Long Island. I happen to know about it, because I am invited. In fact, I am on my way there now. I will take you girls along with me, if you wish to go. I shall stop only a moment at the office, and then make the drive to Bay Shore. I don't expect to get there before ten o'clock. That red car, when we met it eight or ten miles back, was going in the opposite direction, so if the young woman in it was Katherine Mayten, she apparently won't be home in time for her own party.”

“But why should there be any doubt about it?” I asked. “I mean, why should there be any question of Katherine Mayten assuming a disguise?”

“That is precisely the question that we are endeavoring to answer. But our observations up to date appear to leave us very much in doubt as to what the answer should be.”

Then he opened the throttle, and the car sprang forward into full speed.

“TEN o'clock on the dot,” Dr. Goodrich stated, as we pulled into the private roadway and came to a stop at the door of Frederick Mayten's splendid country house at Bay Shore, Long Island. “Four hours and a fraction for the hundred and fifty miles. Not far from forty an hour, eh? You can't hope to do much better than that when you have to come through a lot of towns.”

One of Mr. Mayten's chauffeurs had come to take the car, and we had thrown off our motor-wraps and were starting up the steps when Dr. Goodrich hesitated a moment, and said in a low tone:

“If Mrs. Mayten is here—and I suppose she will be, as this is her party—I wish you girls would take a quick, sharp glance at her as soon as you are within view, and then register clearly to yourself your impression as to how closely she resembles your dark-haired young woman of the inn and the red car. Let me know afterward what it is.”

As we entered the big reception-room, where eight or ten people were gathered, Katherine Mayten came forward quickly and with outstretched hand to greet us. The color of her hair was certainly far from black. As I appraised it now, with the light glinting against it, the rather absurd phrase “fine-spun amber” came into my mind—suggested, perhaps, by the half-conscious observation that the young woman wore a string of heavy and very beautiful amber beads about her neck.

But neither hair nor beads held my attention for more than an instant; I became vividly conscious of the really wonderful eyes—big, lustrous, of so dark a hazel that in the dim light they seemed of fathomless blackness, in almost startling contrast with the pallor of the forehead and the flashing whiteness of the teeth that were revealed enticingly as the young woman laughed an exuberant welcome.

"Dr. Goodrich! It *was* good of you to come. Frederick will be delighted. I told him you had half promised to come."

"I wholly promised," corrected the physician, smiling. "But, of course, when one has to come all the way from the city in a motor, there is always the opportunity for an accident."

"You have come much farther than that, if I mistake not." Then, as if thinking better of what she was about to say, she exclaimed: "I am certain you never let a wonderful day like this go by without visiting your Three Brooks! Am I not right?" Her smile was bewitching.

The physician looked straight into those great questioning eyes for several moments, his face wearing an expression hard to interpret, before he answered: "Quite right, Mrs. Mayten; quite right. And we came down in record time."

The girl had averted her eyes for a moment. Now instantly she flashed them back at him, as she cried out, with a little laugh: "Record time. Are you sure of that? Not an official record, is it?" Then she stopped short and flushed a little, and turned to beckon some one who was approaching. "Oh, Frederick!" she cried.

The man who came forward was a portly individual, round of face and jovial of manner, with the square, low head and the shrewd, deep-set eyes of the man of affairs.

He grasped the doctor's hand cordially. "Glad to see you, Doctor. Certainly glad to see you. Good of you to come down." Then he turned to the young women, feeling that here he would be more at home.

MEANTIME, Mrs. Mayten had seized Dr. Goodrich's arm and, with the lithe, quick action that characterized her, was leading him back to the group of other guests, calling out triumphantly to every one to observe the lion she had captured.

"I tried to get him down for dinner, as I told you," she explained: "But of course he couldn't be torn away from his laboratory at that hour. I believe he never stops work long enough to eat like ordinary mortals, anyhow," she bantered.

The physician regarded her indulgently.

"I have the impression," he said, "that perhaps Mrs. Mayten did not eat much herself to-night. I think she was out on a motor-trip, and probably did not get back in time for dinner." He was watching her intently. "You made a quick trip," he said quietly, with peculiar emphasis.

The girl's eyes still met his fixedly. There was a note of challenge in her voice as she shot back at him, "You remember I told you you did not hold the official record." Then she perhaps regretted what she had said, for she laughed impishly and made a grimace, and turned to the others with an explanation: "Dr. Goodrich is a famous driver. He never takes dust from anybody. But sometimes I have given him a race, all the same." She hesitated a moment, and then added, "And to-day I was in racing mood."

He was still watching her intently, out of the corner of his eye, without seeming to look at her more than casually, as he responded, "But no car that is painted red could get by me to-day."

"I don't know what you can mean by that," she answered, looking up at him archly. "The car I was driving to-day is a big yellow one. Was it not, Mrs. Griffin?"

The woman appealed to was almost abnormally tall, but so well proportioned that her size seemed unusual only by contrast with the persons about her. She was handsome of face, with an almost Grecian profile. There was nothing of softness about the face, however. It had a sternness of aspect which, without marring the beauty, seemed in keeping with her heroic stature and ample proportions. A mass of Titian hair, parted in the middle and adjusted in ample coils at the sides of her head, accentuated the effect of firmness of character. The woman's gesture as she spoke was in keeping with the majestic aspect of her figure. "It is indeed a yellow car. Yellow as saffron," she affirmed. "And for myself, if I may say it, I would never select such a color."

Mrs. Mayten laughed with apparent spontaneity. "I wouldn't choose it, either," she said. "It was chosen for me. But of course it does go better with my hair than yours, dear Brunhilda." The big woman laughed with her good-naturedly.

"The point is, however," Mrs. Mayten continued, "that we got home at seven-thirty. I had just time to get off my motor things and tidy up a bit; but not to fix my hair." She gave a little affectionate pat to her hair as she spoke, still regarding the physician with an expression between bantering whimsicality and outright challenge.

The enigmatic expression had not altogether vanished as she said, "Suppose now we seat ourselves, and see whether we can propitiate the spirits." She paused and made a little gesture of appeal. "You know," she explained, "I have told Dr. Goodrich about the weird things we do here when the spirits are in proper mood; and I hope we shall be able to verify some of them to-night."

Her expression was quite serious. Yet there still lurked about the lips a suspicion of a smile, and there was a suggestion of mockery in the glance she flashed at him. He met it with a look of grave serenity.

THE séance that followed did not at first reveal any differences from a thousand other similar amateur performances.

The moving spirit—and doubtless the moving hand also—belonged to a big hulk of a man with rather heavy face and a sinister expression—Gustave Beuscher by name, a member of the Shoreham colony across the island.

A young woman whose name I had caught as Miss Elsby sat opposite, and, so Dr. Goodrich suspected, probably cooperated with Mr. Beuscher. The physician did not recall seeing Miss Elsby before, but he was struck with her resemblance to Mrs. Mayten as regards size, figure, color, hair and beauty of features—with the difference, however, that her eyes were pale blue, in striking contrast with the other young woman's dark-hazel ones.

Automatic writing followed experiments with table-tipping while Dr. Goodrich stood or sat in the background watching these various "manifestations" with amiably disguised indifference. He knew that these were only "curtain-raisers" for the main performance. Katherine Mayten had hovered about her guests, arranging everything and obviously keeping matters in hand at all stages. It was pretty clear, however, that she was under nervous tension, and the explanation of this was evident when Beuscher suggested that she give an exhibition of her psychic power with the ouija-board. She acquiesced with apparent reluctance.

"I believe I have stage-fright," she asserted with rather greater seriousness of tone than she had hitherto affected. "Will you assist me, Dr. Goodrich?"

"I shall be pleased to. From your husband—and various other people—I have heard some remarkable stories about your control over the ouija-board."

She glanced at him quickly, but he was gazing placidly at the board.

It is not necessary to go into details of the ouija-board examination. The doctor asked at what hour he had risen that morning, and ouija answered, "Four o'clock." When asked what he had done at that unusual hour, the reply was that he had painted a picture. He pronounced both of these curious answers correct and the company was properly impressed. For a final question—having been told at what hour he left the farm—he asked whether his car had stopped anywhere in the course of the journey to New York, and was assured by ouija that it had stopped at the railway station in New Milford, to take on two passengers. The physician assented, of course, and expressed himself as being greatly under obligation to ouija for the interesting demonstration.

If the performance of the ouija-board was mysterious, however, the exhibition that succeeded was infinitely more so. The performer this time was Mrs. Griffin—she of the imposing figure, whom Katherine Mayten had addressed as "Brunhilda."

Brunhilda, urged by Katherine Mayten, agreed to go into a "trance" and endeavor to get into telepathic communication with her husband—a feat, we were told, which she had frequently accomplished. Almost immediately after she had closed her eyes she murmured that she could see her husband just entering the house.

"I mean Bleak House," she explained, "our summer cottage over on the cliff near Shoreham."

For a few moments she was altogether silent and quite motionless, except that her bosom heaved and that she seemed to clutch a little at the arms of the chair, as if to support herself while she drew a deeper breath. Presently she whispered: "Ernest, I am speaking. Do you hear me?"

Katherine Mayten tiptoed to the chair where Dr. Goodrich was sitting and plucked at his sleeve. She gestured toward a telephone standing on a table near the other end of the room. "Come with me," she whispered. "We will telephone to Bleak House and you will have a chance to make a genuine test. It is really wonderful." Her eyes dilated as she spoke, and she whispered the words as if in the utmost confidence. Then she took up the telephone-receiver and in a low voice asked for a number. Half a minute or so later she held out the receiver.

Dr. Goodrich spoke into the 'phone and was told that Mr. Griffin was at the other end of the wire. He was assured that Mr. Griffin had an indefinable feeling that he had sometimes experienced when his wife was in that telepathic communication with him. He would very gladly answer any questions. He knew Dr. Goodrich very well by reputation, and had even met him once or twice. The physician then put the question:

"When did you return to your home?"

Over the telephone the answer came back:

"Five minutes ago."

The physician, still sitting at the 'phone, spoke in loud enough voice to be heard by every one in the room: "Mrs. Griffin, I have asked your husband when he returned to his home. Did you hear his answer?"

The woman in the chair did not move or give any evidence of consciousness, except that she opened her lips sufficiently to intone, in a clear, fully audible voice, the words "five minutes ago."

The physician's face was impassive as ever. He spoke softly in the 'phone. "Suppose you do something with one of your hands and tell me that you've done it—or, better yet, suppose you tell me you have done something without doing it."

The answer came back: "I have thought of lifting my left hand to my head."

And almost immediately, without waiting for any prompting question from the physician, the woman in the big chair intoned, "I have thought of lifting my left hand to my head."

Again the physician paused a little, then he said, over the 'phone: "I have one other suggestion. Suppose you do something, or think of doing something without telling me what it is. We shall see if your message comes to Mrs. Griffin, and then, afterward, you can tell me what you thought."

The response came, "Very well; I am thinking of something."

The physician started to speak to the woman in the chair, but she interrupted him with the exclamation: "I feel that he is thinking now of a trip he is planning to take to-morrow!"

The physician spoke into the 'phone, "Of what were you thinking?"

The answer came: "I was thinking of a trip I am planning to take to-morrow."

The physician spoke once more over the 'phone: "Thank you, Mr. Griffin; it has been a most interesting demonstration. I need not trouble you further. Thank you again." As he hung up the receiver, Mrs. Mayten was at his side.

"Were you interested?" she asked eagerly.

"It is certainly most interesting. Of course, one must reserve judgment and consider other alternatives before one considers it demonstrative of telepathy."

"But what could be the alternative?"

The physician looked full at her for some little time before he answered, "A woman of your intelligence, Mrs. Mayten, can easily think of at least one alternative."

As he still regarded the girl, her face flushed. But she replied: "I am afraid you overestimate my intelligence. You know we cannot all be great scientists. The thing seems to me so simple and so wonderful. I hoped you would find it so."

"I do find it simple, Mrs. Mayten; to that extent at least, we agree."

Then he stepped quickly to the side of the woman who was reclining in the upholstered chair. He stood directly in front of her and, stooping, touched her arm, and with kindly, professional air bade her come back to consciousness. She seemed slowly to awaken, opened her eyes, drew a deep breath and looked about her with the air of being startled. Then she sighed deeply once or twice and laughed a little.

"Is everything all right?" she asked.

"Quite all right," responded the physician. And as he turned away, his face was wearing an enigmatic smile.

AS WE were driving back to the city an hour or so later,

"Just what is the purport of this meeting?" I ventured to ask him.

He meditated a little time.

"An object-lesson to me," he said finally.

"The intention was to let me know that I am being watched. To endeavor to convince me that everything I do will be known. That I am dealing with people who have occult powers of which I may well take cognizance."

"You mean they are warning you?"

He laughed. "Hardly that. The intention is to secure the safety of others. But from that standpoint the meeting was a failure. They overplayed their hand."

Nothing more was said until we were slowed up in pulling across the bridge at Fifty-ninth Street, bringing us back to Manhattan. Then the physician turned in his seat and asked abruptly,

"Well, girls, what was your impression?"

"You mean about the black-haired girl and Katherine Mayten?" asked Mazie Marshall.

"Yes; or, at least, partly that."

"I think the black-haired girl *was* Katherine Mayten," said Miss Marshall emphatically.

"And so do I," Miriam Cooper agreed.

The physician's face was animated now. He was smiling broadly and without reserve. But he only said, "I have always claimed that the only place from which to view New York properly is the middle of one of the East River bridges, preferably at night."

And I knew that we should hear no more that night of Katherine Mayten and her rather strange assortment of friends.

THE White Pheasant Inn stands back from the road, on a little hillock with a clump of big trees about it, between Danbury and New Milford. You do not see the inn at all, owing to a little rise of ground just by the roadside, but if you are wise you will turn in if it chances to be near dinner-time, for the White Pheasant is justly famed for its "home cooking." This was the verdict of two young people who had dined at a table on the lawn by the wistaria arbor.

The young woman—she seemed scarcely beyond girlhood—had been leaning forward, looking eagerly into the face of her companion, a face of rather sinister type; its heavy sensuality emphasized at the moment by the way the light fell on it from the single Japanese lantern hung from the wistaria arbor.

The face of the girl was altogether in the shadow, yet sufficiently revealed to leave no doubt as to its beauty, while the poise of her head and her alertness of manner and vivacity of speech gave instant impression of an appealing personality.

"I wish you wouldn't be so cynical, Gustave."

The girl's voice was low, the tone ingratiating, almost pleading.

"Is it cynical to tell you that I think you are the loveliest thing in the world? Is it cynical to say that being here with you tonight is like a trip into fairy-land? Is it cynical to say that there is nothing in the world I would not do for you?"

The girl put her hands to her face. Apparently she was striving to repress her emotion.

"Hush, Gustave! You must not—must not—say such things. Think of Georgina!"

"I do think of her. How can I forget her? It is she who stands between us. But why speak of my wife to-night? This is fairy-land—dream-land. Let us be just ourselves for a few hours. It is very early. See! The moon is just rising. Isn't it wonderful?"

The girl had uncovered her face now and was leaning forward, her ungloved hands on the table. She seemed earnest, naive almost; yet a keen analyst of character might have questioned the sincerity of her actions.

Was she, perhaps, only playing a part? If so, her companion did not suspect it. He was wrapped in self-complacency and obsessed by the seeming success of his plans.

"In half an hour," he said, in a low, even voice, "we can be on the crest of Laurel Hill. Can you picture it in this light? The laurel is in full bloom. There are whole masses of it lying like a fairy coverlet about Altar Rock. Along the crest of the ridge and on each successive terrace below there are great isolated bushes that will stand out like giant bouquets——"

"Like ghosts or phantoms, I am afraid," said the girl, with a little grimace.

"Why be morbid on a night like this, Katherine? Come"—he had risen as he spoke—"I will have the car here in a jiffy. We must waste no time, for I want you to see the view just as the moon comes above Falcon Hill. You will find it fascinating."

"It would hardly fascinate Georgina to think of our being there like that," the girl murmured, and again she put her hands to her face. "Still less would it fascinate my husband," she whispered almost inaudibly.

"There is no reason why either of them should mind. Don't be foolish, Katherine. Let us give ourselves, for a few hours, the privilege of forgetting."

"Do you really think it will be quite all right—quite proper?"

There was more than a hint of mockery in the words; but the man was too far obsessed with the sense of conquest to perceive it. He laughed outright as he cried:

"Ridiculous question! Will you never get over your prudishness, Katherine? Of course it will be all right. Come, Queen of the Fairies; we are losing time."

And the girl, regarding him fixedly with eyes that shone with a strange, enigmatic light, made no further remonstrance. But as the light fell on her face, her cheeks were pale as the moonlight.

TWO or three minutes later, a big two-seated eight-cylinder motor, of racing model, bright red in color, drew out from under the sign of the White Pheasant, veered to the left, and went dashing up the road toward New Milford.

And then, while the dust from the red car still hung in a little cloud beneath the sign of the White Pheasant, another car of similar model, as big, as powerful, also two-seated, but painted dark blue, drew out of the shadow of the inn and crept quietly into the road, then turned in the direction that the other car had taken and forged into full speed.

In this car also sat a man and a woman. But there was no smile on the face of either.

The man was of powerful build, with the broadly modeled, rather coarse features of the "good liver." The woman was frail, petite, of the type that one speaks of as "a bundle of nerves." She was gripping at the seat of the car with one hand and at the door-handle with the other to relieve the nervous tension. Between the occupants of the car no word was spoken.

Perhaps ten minutes had elapsed when the red car slowed down for the sharp turn at the New Milford bridge. As they made the turn, the young woman was peering back over her shoulder.

"There isn't a doubt of it, Gustave," she said in a voice that revealed or simulated consternation. "That car is following us."

"Nonsense, Pusskin"— he used a diminutive that he had not ventured before—"who could be following us? We are alone in fairy-land to-night. That car, I suppose, is going up to Litchfield, like a dozen others. We will lose them there at the turn, when we take the Roxbury road."

"I hope so. But oh, Gustave, I am apprehensive!"

"More ghosts!" he laughed. "But we will lose this one at the foot of the hill."

The girl's face now was as pale as that of any ghost could be. Her mind was a seething whirlpool of contending emotions. Again the impulse was strong in her to turn back. Her chaotic vision revealed only one clear image—her husband's face. His eyes seemed to stare at her, to pierce her through and through. They seemed alternately to appeal and to threaten.

But her volition seemed paralyzed. For a moment it seemed to her that she was losing consciousness—being drawn down into a great maelstrom, with dark waters closing about her. She realized that she had thrown back her head and was gasping for breath. Then she was conscious that a voice near at hand was saying, "Here is where we lose them."

They were at the foot of the street where the Litchfield road veers to the left, and the red car had turned to the right and begun the long ascent of the Turkey Hill Road.

But the prophecy of the red car's driver was not verified; for the blue car, following at a little interval, made the same turn and came up the hill at about the same rate of speed as the other.

The red car passed over the crest of the hill, and made the descent at what seemed almost perilous speed. The blue car proceeded somewhat more cautiously down the hill, but regained the lost ground on the level stretch beyond. Then came the long climb up the winding road through the woods.

Here the driver of the blue car had threatened to overtake the other; the red car proceeded up the hill at extraordinary speed, and the driver of the second car could not gain a yard. He did maintain his distance, however, and was probably not more than eighty rods behind when the forward car passed around the curve just at the top of the hill. Here the road makes two sharp turns.

The couple in the blue car had maintained silence, their nerves straining, as if thereby to aid the car's progress. Now, as they neared the top of the hill, with the curve perhaps forty rods ahead, the woman gave a little scream; for around the curve and swinging wide, came a car driven at such speed that it threatened to overturn.

"They are coming back," cried the woman.

"Good God! So they are; damn them!" growled the man in a voice between astonishment and anger.

And as he spoke he turned the steering-wheel of his car and brought the machine across the road so that it blocked the way.

"They can't get away with that game," he muttered. The woman was standing now, her arms uplifted. Her low cry turned into a shriek.

For it was obvious that the driver of the red car did not mean to stop!

Another instant, and the roar of the motors was merged in a frightful crash; the grinding crash blended with an explosion—a series of explosions.

A moment before there had been two beautiful racing cars; there remained one tangled mass of wreckage. A little flicker of flame shot up; and instantly the wreckage was revealed in a sheet of fire.

Then it could be seen that the body of a man lay stretched out, utterly collapsed, in the road just beyond the wreckage. Evidently the driver of the red car had been hurled forward when the collision occurred; dashed through the wind-shield of his own car and completely over the wreckage of the other. His body lay there, face upward, forehead and one cheek gashed, eyes and mouth open, lifeless.

ALMOST immediately two cars had drawn up, one at either side of the wreck. A man was stooping over the body, applying his ear to the chest.

"Stone-dead," he affirmed, in a tone of professional assurance. "Help me carry him a little farther away from the fire," he suggested to his companion.

Then the two men, and the two others from the second car, stood watching the flames. It was impossible to go near the wreck while that fierce holocaust lasted.

From the distance at which the observers stood, no semblance of a human form could be seen. The bodies were buried in the midst of the jangled wreckage. Before the fire could burn itself out, they would be charred, probably beyond recognition.

Dr. Daniel Goodrich, the man who had examined the body of the motorist and pronounced it lifeless, and Dr. Alexander Van Buren, his friend and official assistant, stood looking down on the form of the man who had driven the red racing car to this mad climax. The elder physician had noted, as he first leaned over the body, that the gashes in forehead and cheek of the dead man, made probably by the glass of the wind-shield as he was hurled through it, or perhaps by contact with some part of the other car, did not bleed. He was asking himself just what that signified.

"Do you know, Van Buren," said the elder man, "there certainly was something very queer about that collision. You saw how the blue car stopped, and how the other car made no attempt to get out of its way. Either the driver lost control of the wheel or else he did not intend to pass. The position of this man suggests that he was driving the other car. He would have been hurled forward about where we found him. If he were dead before the cars collided, that, of course, would explain the situation—after a fashion."

"You think he might have been frightened when he saw how near they were to colliding, and have died of heart-failure?"

"I am inclined to think he had been dead some minutes at least before the accident."

"But if so, there must have been some one in the car with him, for he came around that corner, and a dead man couldn't very well guide the car."

"Well, there may have been some one with him, of course. In that wreckage you can't tell. Let us ask these other people what they know about it. Their car was up the road; perhaps they saw something."

It appeared that the two men had been in a car that was drawn up beside the road just beyond the curve, perhaps one hundred yards from the place where the accident occurred. They had punctured a tire, and one of the men was repairing it. The other stood beside the car. A red car, driving at a furious speed, had passed them and gone around the second curve. Both men were sure that the car had two occupants, a man and a woman. A few moments later a car had come around the curve, driving at moderate speed, and had turned well out into the road to pass their car, without modifying its speed. As it passed, the man who was not working on the tire noticed that this was a red car similar to the one that had gone by in the opposite direction just before. He could not say that it was the same car, but he was disposed to think that it was; or would be so disposed were it not that he felt certain there was only one person in the car when it returned. That person was a man who had attracted his attention particularly because he seemed to be huddled over the wheel in a curious fashion. He had given the impression of being intoxicated. Yet he seemed to guide the car perfectly, swerving out to the left and then returning to the right side of the road, and passing round the curve with his machine apparently under perfect control.

A moment later, however, there had come the crash.

"You feel quite certain that the driver of the car was alone?"

"Entirely so. The man was alone. I could not be mistaken about that."

"But you do not feel sure whether it was the same car that had gone by in the opposite direction just before?"

"As to that, I cannot be certain. It looked like the same car; but there were two people in the other car."

"But one person might have got out?"

"That seems unlikely. There is no house within half a mile."

Just then a car came round the corner, and the driver pulled up, startled, and joined the group. Interrogated, he declared that he had met no red car, in fact no car of any kind, within several miles. There is no cross-road, and any car traveling that way would have had to go along the same road that he had just come.

It seemed clearly established, therefore, that the red car had turned about, just around the second curve, and had returned with a single passenger. What had become of the other one?

When, finally, the fire burned itself out, and the wreckage had cooled sufficiently to be examined, the charred remains of two bodies were found. The man and the woman in the blue car were accounted for. The driver of the red car lay dead by the roadside. There was no question at all that there had been two passengers in each car when they passed through the town of New Milford; and several motorists confirmed the report already given that there was a woman with the man in the red car shortly before the tragedy. Yet the men who had come along the road only two or three minutes later had seen no one.

Why the woman left the car and where she had gone were matters regarding which no one appeared to be able to offer any plausible surmise.

"Van Buren," said Dr. Goodrich, "there is a good deal more to it than appears on the surface. It would pass for an everyday automobile accident; but it is, I believe, something quite different from that. And as the victims of this wreck appear to have been New Yorkers, the case falls more or less within our official cognizance."

"If you are right in assuming that this man was dead some minutes before the accident occurred," said the younger man, "I should say that it is the most mysterious case that I have ever encountered."

"It is mysterious—of that there is no doubt. It is up to us to explain the mystery. To that end, I want to rummage a little in the wreckage now that things are fairly cooled off. Meantime, suppose you see if you can get a few mils of blood from a vein in the man's arm before it coagulates. There are instruments in the bag in the car, you know. And, by the way, Van Buren, what time have you?"

"Just twenty minutes after ten. The accident occurred exactly at ten o'clock. I happened to be looking at my watch just when the crash came."

At THE home of Judge Lind, in the little summer village of Shoreham, on the north coast of Long Island, something occurred that night which to those who witnessed it appeared to be an amazing phenomenon.

The judge himself, though a pronounced skeptic in matters esoteric, admitted that he was impressed far more than by anything he had ever seen before of so-called psychic manifestations. And at least two others of the company became enthusiastic converts to the doctrine that spiritistic manifestations are actualities.

Judge Lind and his wife had invited a small company of intimates for an evening at bridge. Most of the company had assembled at about nine o'clock, but as usual there were some late comers.

Among these was Mrs. Frederick Mayten, of Bay Shore, who had motored across the island. It was about a quarter to ten when she arrived, and she came full of apologies for the delay, but in exuberant spirits, after her usual fashion. She reported that she had been delayed in starting because she had waited for her husband, and had only at the last moment received a wire saying that he was kept in town by business.

A few minutes later, when every one was busily engaged in bridge, Mrs. Mayten, seated at a table and apparently absorbed in the game, suddenly dropped her cards, and with a startled expression turned in her chair and appeared to listen intently.

There was almost entire silence in the room, each group intent on its game; but Mrs. Mayten's companions, startled in turn by her action, now noticed that the clock in the neighboring room was chiming the hour of ten.

Mrs. Mayten appeared to listen until the clock stopped striking. Then she slowly got up, and her hands were pressed to her face. "Oh, it is terrible!" she gasped, under her breath.

Judge Lind, who was sitting at her right, sprang to her side.

"Are you ill?" he asked with solicitude.

"No, no!" she gasped. "I'm not ill; but I have a dreadful sense of apprehension. It came to me all at once. I feel that something terrible has happened. Could you—would you—telephone to New York and see if you can get Frederick?"

Judge Lind hastened to the telephone to humor Mrs. Mayten's whim, and the others gathered about her, questioning as to just what she had felt or seen.

She had seemed, she said, to see her husband in his office, alone, at work; and then there had seemed to be some one with him, and a dreadful, haunting face had glared at her. No impressionable person could fail to share somewhat in the young woman's solicitude. And when Judge Lind had reported that he got no response from the office, and that from the apartment it was told him that Mr. Mayten had ordered his car and driven away at six o'clock that evening, presumably bound for his home in Bay Shore, it could not be denied that the case took on an aspect of genuine seriousness. If Mr. Mayten had started for Bay Shore at six o'clock, in his big blue racing car, he should have reached home by half-past seven at the latest.

While the matter was still a topic of excited discussion, Judge Lind was summoned to the telephone to receive word, relayed from New Milford, Connecticut, that there had been an automobile accident in which Mr. Frederick Mayten had been killed instantly, and also two other friends of Judge Lind's, members of the Shoreham colony, Mr. and Mrs. Gustave Beuscher.

Full details were not forthcoming. But, so far as could be learned, Mr. Mayten had been alone in his car, driving away from New Milford, seemingly bound for Roxbury; whereas Mr. and Mrs. Gustave Beuscher were driving toward New Milford, probably bound for New York. The cars had come together, head on, at a bend in the road, and death had been instantaneous for all of the occupants.

Judge Lind and his guests heard this report with horror. But when the report came, in answer to his question, that the accident had occurred almost exactly at ten o'clock, their astonishment—at the recollection that Mrs. Mayten had had her "vision" precisely as the clock was striking—took precedence, for a moment at any rate, even over their sense of grief.

THE account of the tragic death of Mr. and Mrs. Gustave Beuscher and Mr. Frederick Mayten that appeared in the the New York newspapers did not differ substantially from the report that had been made to Judge Lind.

Only a few people were in position to know that some features of this report lacked accuracy. And of these, probably only two—namely, Dr. Goodrich and Dr. Van Buren—were aware that there were elements of mystery associated with the case that gave it an interest quite out of the ordinary. And only Dr. Goodrich himself knew whether any clues had been secured that were likely to be of aid in solving the mystery.

In point of fact, Dr. Goodrich had gained only two or three items of information that promised to be of value. One of these was the fact, already recorded, that Mr. Gustave Beuscher—he being the driver of the red car—had died before the "accident" occurred; a second, that the tracks of a woman, apparently wearing overshoes, were discovered leading into the woods just beyond the bend in the road where the red car had turned about.

There was nothing so very startling about the discovery of the tracks, for it was clear that the woman must have got out of the car, and presumably gone into the woodland. But why the rubbers?

Dr. Goodrich made a special note of that. He named the fact afterward as one of his most important clues.

Another observation which Dr. Goodrich considered significant was made so far afield that a person of less astute mind would not have associated it with the case in hand.

It chanced that Dr. Goodrich had driven down to Shoreham, a few days after the automobile accident, apparently to interrogate, more or less casually, Judge Lind and a few others with reference to the occurrence at the bridge party.

Just before he came to the turn in the road that leads directly from the main highway to the little village, the doctor met a gray-bearded octogenarian whom he had known for some years and in whose quaint personality he was interested.

"What is new with you, Uncle Wallace?" asked Dr. Goodrich cheerily.

"Nothin' much; nothin' much. Excep' that I did see somethin' strange the other night."

It appeared that the strange thing Uncle Wallace had seen was an automobile, not in itself peculiar, but attracting attention by its altogether extraordinary activities. The car when he first saw it had been standing by the roadside three or four miles away in the scrub-oak wilderness, on a road little traveled, but along which Uncle Wallace had occasion to walk on the way to his modest clearing. The moon had just risen, and Uncle Wallace could see the car "as plain as day." It was quite empty. He assumed that the owner had gone into the brush, perhaps hunting rabbits; but scarcely had he passed the car when he heard a sound, and turning back, he saw that the machine had started to move. It moved out into the road and progressed at good speed until it disappeared in the distance.

"Uncle Wallace, I know you for a very honest man. But I suppose you are aware that that is a rather remarkable tale you you are telling," said the physician. "Are you quite positive that there was no one in the car?"

"Absolutely positive. I passed within five feet of the car, and there was nobody anywhere about."

"Are you sure it wasn't a phantom car?" asked the doctor, smiling.

"It wasn't any phantom when I passed it. But it sure did act like a phantom afterward," Uncle Wallace conceded.

"Well, I will have to investigate the matter, Uncle Wallace. Anyway, I am obliged to you for telling me about it."

As Dr. Goodrich drove away he thought of the automobile accident near New Milford; and he recalled that the red car that had dashed with such disastrous effect into the other had moved apparently without human guidance—if his inference that the seeming driver was dead were a correct one. And he began to wonder if he could find any link of association between the red car, moving in response to no visible human impulse, and Uncle Wallace's phantom car over here—fifty or sixty miles away—on Long Island.

When a little later he heard the story of Mrs. Mayten's "vision," he thought again of the two phantom cars.

IT WAS the late afternoon of a gorgeous June day. The season at the White Pheasant Inn was not yet at its full height, but the past few days had been suggestive of summer, and a number of motorists, on their way to the Berkshires, had stopped for a cup of tea and light refreshments.

Madame the proprietress was bustling about, exchanging greeting with various guests whom she remembered from other seasons.

Now *madame* paused for a moment by a front window, and her face wore a slightly puzzled expression. It was one of her chief functions, as becomes the proprietress of an inn, to remember faces. She was puzzled now because she could not feel sure whether or not she had seen the young man and woman who were just getting out of a splendid roadster. The man was tall, quick of action, handsome of face, distinguished of bearing. The woman, although in mourning, wore a costume of undeniable jauntiness.

"She is partly French—or else Austrian," was *madame's* verdict. But did she know these guests? It puzzled her that she could not find the answer. The man, she felt sure, she had never seen before. But the young woman?

No; she had never seen the young woman before. But she had seen some one very like her. Ah, now she remembered. It was *mademoiselle* of the laughing eyes who had come up in the big red car one evening about ten days ago. Yes, yes. The same eyes, the same full, luscious lips, upturned at the corners. The same figure and the same *distingué* bearing. The two might be sisters. But no! The other was a blonde, with masses of soft fluffy hair that showed beneath her motor-cap. This girl was a brunette, with coils of hair dark as the crêpe of the turban just above it. But her eyes? Well, one could not see at such a distance. They seemed dark, but perhaps only because of the heavy lashes. Ah, yes! *Monsieur* was fortunate to have such eyes look at him like that!

Seated at the table by the wistaria arbor, out of ear-shot of any one for the moment, the young woman spoke earnestly to her companion:

"This is the place, Henry. Gustave—the poor fool!—sat here. Do not look around yet, for there are two men watching us. They are the men we saw in the gray car there in Danbury. I could not quite make them out then, but now I know them. They are plain-clothes men in the regular service. One is Jimmie Angus. I am not quite sure about the other's name, but I think it is Warpole."

"Do you think they have a line on us?"

"There isn't a doubt of it. And for half a cent I would have the count give them a dose of the same medicine he gave to that other bunch. Only, I hate to spoil a perfectly good car."

"Also, I don't hanker after the rôle of Gustave," smiled the other.

"You know I don't mean *that*, Henry," the girl said.

Thereat her companion laughed outright and chuckled. "I thought I could get a rise out of you, Pusskin."

Then the girl, too, laughed; and if one had thought her alluring before, she was now enchanting, compelling; of a radiant beauty few men could look upon and quite fully keep their judgment in hand.

The two men sitting at the window saw that the girl was laughing, and one of them winked at the other.

"She will laugh out of the other side of her mouth before we are through with her to-day, or I miss my guess, Angus," he said in an undertone.

"I hope you are right, Warpole. I intend that you shall be right. With Jirtle there to aid us, it seems as if we could not lose. But she is the cleverest vixen that ever played with a man; and her brother, the count——"

"Yes; I know about him. I came across him over in Vienna, some years ago. And, by the bye, the little minx herself was no child even then."

"She doesn't look a day over eighteen."

"In reality, she is pretty nearly ten years older than that. And in experience——"

"In experience they are all of one age if they chance to fall for a man. Wasn't it lucky she took a fancy to Jirtle?"

"It was our salvation. If now he minds his p's and q's, we shall have the whole situation in hand within the next six hours. Ah, they are moving."

The girl and her companion had risen and were passing through the wistaria arbor and on toward their car. The girl moved with eyes slightly downcast and a demure manner, studied, perhaps, to appear in keeping with her attire. Her companion gave one quick glance toward the men by the window as he passed, and a little gesture, hardly perceptible, which the men at the table appeared to understand.

For a few minutes they made no move to follow. But both watched the yellow car intently.

JUST about an hour later, as the sun was lowering toward the top of the cliffs that overhang the Shepaug, the yellow car sped along the road near the water's edge and came to a standstill beneath a big hickory, at the edge of a woodland that gave one the impression of inpenetrable wildness.

"You would never dream that you were

only ninety miles or so from New York, would you?" asked the girl.

"It seems like the heart of the wilderness," the man replied quite truthfully. "We haven't passed a house for a mile back, and except that this is a sort of road—although no one apparently ever goes along it—one might suppose that we were making a voyage of discovery."

"And so we are," cried the girl lightly. "Do you forget where we are going?"

She sprang from the car as she spoke and beckoned him to follow her.

"No; I do not forget, and I am all eagerness," he answered. But he did not follow her with the alacrity that might have been expected. His eyes glanced furtively down the road.

The girl was watching him. She laughed outright and then made a little mocking gesture.

"Oh, never fear they are following us. I saw them only a mile behind at the last curve there. But they are bound to give us a little leeway. Meantime, we will slip back into the woods here, and up the hill, and then we can watch them and see what they will do when they find our empty car. Come; you are not afraid of climbing, are you?"

"Afraid of climbing? Mountain is my middle name. I grew up in the Tyrol."

They had not gone a hundred yards back into the woodland, beating their way through a thicket of laurel, when they came suddenly on a wire fence, not less than twelve feet high, of a fine mesh.

"In the name of wonder what is this?" cried Jirtle.

"Just a fairy fence about our fairy-land, to keep in the animals and to keep out the neighbors," laughed the girl. "But for us it is no barrier, as you shall see."

She had stepped close to the fence as she spoke, and the man noted with interest and surprise that she caught a little metal hook with either hand about the meshes of the wire, then stepped back and lifted her arms, as if signaling. She held one hand before her lips and called in a clear voice,

"Open for the queen of the fairies, and drive straight ahead."

To the man's amazement, a little section of the fence, between two tree-trunks, swung back like a gate, and the way was clear for them to enter.

"After you, my dear Alphonse!" cried the girl in a bantering tone.

The man hesitated. He was glancing again furtively toward the road, now hardly visible.

"Are you afraid of fairies or of snakes?" the girl called out, still laughing.

"Of fairies—yes. At least, of one fairy."

"Then perhaps you will do well to stay on the outside. The men in the gray car will possibly give you a lift as far as the station. But don't tell them that you were afraid. They might not understand."

He looked at her searchingly. Was she taunting him? Her beaming eyes and the flash of her smile belied her words. The man stepped through the gateway, and saw with astonishment that it closed after them, leaving the fence seemingly unbroken.

"Straight toward the big walnut, then on toward the hemlock and the top of that big rock. It's a bit of a climb," she prompted.

THE ascent was about as steep as could comfortably be managed, and as the climbers progressed from one terrace to another, they found themselves coming out upon a little level space that proved to be the top of a high cliff.

"Do not get too close to the brink," the girl cautioned. "There is a legend that a man fell over there one day, and you can guess what happened to him. Perhaps a fairy pushed him."

Again there was an unfamiliar tang in the girl's tone. Again the man looked at her questioningly. But, as before, she was smiling and regarding him with a look that, despite his momentary apprehension, made his pulse tingle.

And now she was pointing down toward the road from which they had come. There was an opening in the trees just at the place where they had left the car, and they looked over the tops of the underbrush and even the taller trees on the lower ledges.

The man was staring vacantly down toward the roadway.

"In the name of wonder, what has become of the yellow car?" he questioned.

"The fairies have moved it on. Did you not notice that I commanded 'Straight forward!' when we were there at the gateway?"

"I heard you say something like that. Do you mean to say that you referred to the car?"

"Even so; and the car responded. If you doubt it, let us climb a little to that ledge off there at the left. From there we will have a view over the tops of the trees and down to a clear space by the river. I thought it better that the car should stop there, so that our friends who are following should not know just where we entered."

She was smiling at him, but with a different expression. There was a hint of malice in her eyes, and something of the youth had gone from her face. But her beauty was enhanced rather than marred by the touch of maturity.

A few minutes later they were looking down into the valley, and the yellow car was indeed visible, standing in an open space where the road widens.

"The trees have been cleared away to give us this view," the girl explained. "Now let me prove to you that we are in fairy-land."

She was standing with arms folded, erect, head thrown back, a striking figure, all in black.

"Phantom car," she said in a low voice, "the queen of the fairies commands you. Give attention! Go forward!"

To the man's utter bewilderment, he saw the yellow car in the valley move forward even as the girl's words were spoken.

"Circle to the left," she commanded.

And, unbelievable as it seemed, he saw that the car moved now in a circle until it came back to the position in which he had first seen it.

"Continue in the circle and stop on the opposite side of the road."

The man no longer wondered. He was past the stage of wonderment. And then the girl called out, hardly above a whisper, "Stop there!"

And the man was so under spell of what he had seen that now he would have wondered had the car failed to obey. But it did not fail. It came to a stop instantly at her command.

At that moment, Jirtle saw that the gray car had come into view, around the turn in the road, and was moving slowly forward. Apparently its occupants had come upon the yellow car unexpectedly, and it could readily be surmised that they did not know just what to think of what they saw.

Jirtle had advanced to the edge of the cliff. The girl was standing at one side a little back of him. She watched him closely.

"It would be useless to call out," she said quietly. "At this distance they would never hear us. Otherwise, we might caution them not to touch the car."

"Not to touch the car? Why?"

"It would be dangerous to touch it. The car of a fairy queen may not be touched with impunity by mere mortals."

The tone of mockery was no longer veiled. And the smile on the girl's face was no longer good to see.

THE gray car had pulled up at the opposite side of the road from the yellow one, and its occupants got out and were looking this way and that, obviously puzzled. Presently one of them walked across the road and approached the yellow car. He walked about it, inspecting it carefully. Then he leaned over and reached out his hand as if to grasp the steering-wheel.

The girl up there on the cliff, and the man beside her, watched every movement.

For a moment Jirtle's attention was distracted by the strange words the girl was saying. Speaking in a monotone, without raising her voice, she intoned, "'Man born of woman is of few days and full of sorrow.'"

For an instant only, Jirtle regarded her; then he glanced quickly back down into the valley, and an exclamation of horror involuntarily escaped him. For he saw that the man who had leaned over to inspect the steering-gear of the yellow car had collapsed, clutching the mechanism, and that his head had now fallen forward so that he was doubled over the door of the car.

Now they saw that the other man sprang toward his companion, and as he touched him, swinging upon the running-board, he, too, fell forward and collapsed across the body of his companion.

"Good God, they are dead!" cried Jirtle.

The girl had not moved. She stood there now with arms folded, looking down into the valley, seemingly without a trace of emotion.

"It is not written that mortals may with safety invade the realm of the fairy queen," she mocked.

And the man recoiled from her, and there was terror in his face. His teeth were clenched. He uttered no sound. But his right hand went quickly back to his hip.

Then the little ledge of rock on which he stood gave way beneath his feet. The pistol in his hand was flung out into space. He clutched madly to save himself, but his hands grasped only air. He was falling—falling——

THE girl stood alone there on the rock, her arms still folded. The glint of steel was in her eyes.

She leaned forward and peered far down over the edge of the cliff. Then, lifting her eyes a little, she regarded the two other forms huddled together in the yellow car.

"Poor fools!" she murmured.

She stood now in a little grotto, hedged about by hemlocks, poised gracefully. Then as if to balance herself—her feet resting on the moss-covered surface of an outcropping rock—she slowly raised her arms and extended them to full length on either side.

Now the folds of her motor cloak, draping from the arms, gave curiously the effect of a moth or butterfly, magnified to human dimensions, poised in mid-air; and it might be seen that the inner surface of the wings bore radiating lines of silver tracery, like the veins in a leaf or the webs in the wings of a butterfly.

Seeing that graceful, lissome figure, clad all in black, with the outstretched arms and uplifted face, one might have thought that she was invoking some unseen spirit of the woods. Conceivably she might be offering a prayer for the souls of the three men who had been done to death down there in the valley.

But such a conception would have vanished instantly when the girl lowered her head and brought to her lips a cluster of laurel blossoms, which she had casually plucked a little earlier and thrust lightly into her corsage.

The illusion of the butterfly was enhanced as the girl brought the flowers to her lips. Then the illusion vanished and the true meaning of the action was revealed. For instead of inhaling the faint, wild perfume of the blossoms, the girl spoke a few words in a low tone, and what she said seemed out of keeping with the fantasy her seemingly invocational act had conjured.

"Yes; everything is all right. I am quite alone now," she murmured.

Again her arms were extended and the penciled wings swayed lightly, and again it seemed obvious that the girl was listening to some mysterious message. Then once more she brought the flowers to her lips and as before her words were commonplace, worldly, out of keeping with the pantomime.

"I shall expect you, then, in half an hour—at nine o'clock. I shall wait in the hemlock glen. *Au revoir.*"

A new light had come into the girl's face. There was no glint of steel in her eyes, no hardness about the mouth. There was wonderment, rather—or perhaps expectancy.

She turned and circled about the hemlocks, and began to make her way leisurely back into the depth of the woodland and up the gradual ascent. Now and again she paused and spread out her arms in that curious butterfly fashion, turning this way and that and seeming to listen as she had done there in the hemlock grotto.

So quietly she made her way that she might have been a wildling of the forest—a veritable wood-nymph keeping guard over the creatures of her domain.

And when twilight settled over the woodland and the last wood-thrush had been heard, the bird's rare, heart-stirring vesper song was still in her mind; for two or three times she repeated, in cadenced undertone, fragments of verse, quoted or improvised, evidently meant to symbolize the song of the thrush, but telling also of the strange and seemingly paradoxical yearnings that were welling up in the girl's own bosom.

The somberness of night had succeeded the gloaming. Creatures of the day were silenced. Night marauders were ghostlike, giving no intimation of their presence, except that now and again there came the quavering call of the little screech-owl. The night was full of soft and sensuous woodland melodies. And with these murmurings for background, the girl was hearing mystical flutings in many keys brought on the wings of the ether itself from far-off regions—even from overseas.

For now, as she poised there in a sort of ecstasy, she had spread her necromantic wings and, balancing this way and that, she gave vague, half-conscious attention to the musical messages from the ether—practical messages telling of the prosaic doings of mere mortals of the every-day world out there beyond the confines of fairy-land.

For a time the girl listened. Then she slowly brought her hands to her side and crept back gently and seated herself on a mossy bed at the foot of a giant hemlock.

"It must be almost nine, and he is never a minute late," she reflected. And her breath came quicker.

Thus she who in daylight and out in the great world was known as Katherine Mayten, worldling of worldlings, but transformed now under spell of night and the spirit of the woodland into a care-free, world-free nymph—yet still withal a creature of palpitating flesh, desirable and desiring—awaited the coming of her lover in the temple of the hemlocks.

DR. GOODRICH was leaning back in his swivel chair, his chin supported by his left hand; in his right, a typed document.

The young man who sat on the other side of the table watched his face intently, but maintained a discreet silence.

Presently the physician raised his head a little and glanced quickly at his companion.

"Willoughby," he said, with unhurried phrasing, "this report appears to show that Angus and Warpole drove their car at high speed along the road by the river, and—presumably by inadvertence—failed to make the turn, and that the car dove off the high bank, overturned, and landed in the river-bed."

"There is apparently no question about it. The car is still there, bottom side up, in ten feet of water. Warpole's body was pinned under the car at the bottom of the river and was recovered only when we had grappled the axle of the car and lifted it a little with ropes and pulleys operated from the shore. The body of Angus was recovered about a quarter of a mile down-stream, lodged against a big rock."

The physician appeared to meditate. Presently he asked,

"You are satisfied that the men were either drowned or killed by the shock of the accident?"

"The shock probably made them helpless, and Warpole, as I said, was pinned under the car—but actual death appears to have resulted from drowning, as it is reported that there was water in the lungs."

"Had you heard it reported also that samples of this water from the lungs, when Knox tested them, were found to have a quite different mineral content from the water of the river—two or three times as much iron, for example?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"Such is the fact. Moreover, there are abrasions on the hands of both men that are not accounted for in the accident-and-drowning theory. And Gena reports that the blood conditions and in particular the state of the capillary circulation in the spinal cord do not suggest death by traumatic shock or by drowning."

"Astonishing! Do you think, then, that the men were dead before the car went into the water?"

"I have no doubt of it. They had been dead at least six or eight hours, I believe, before the car was driven into the water. Unless I am greatly mistaken, the men were electrocuted."

There was frank astonishment in Willoughby's face.

"Electrocuted? But in the name of wonder when and where and by whom?"

"That is for us to find out," said the physician placidly. Then, with greater animation, he added: "There is no question, Willoughby, that we have to do with a criminal of the most infernal astuteness. Perhaps I should say, rather, group of criminals. The ringleader is a man whose identity I suspect without being quite sure of it. He is a foreigner, probably Austrian. He was on the enemy-alien list and was unquestionably a spy during the war. But he eluded all efforts to take him into custody. He disappeared absolutely, and his activities are known only inferentially. Several men and women known to me, and doubtless a good many who are not known, are his accomplices."

"You refer to the individual whom we have been accustomed to dub 'Count X'?" Willoughby's tone was eager. He raised his head quickly, and glanced expectantly at the physician.

"Just so. For four years now we have been on his trail, and until very recently we have been no nearer to overtaking him than we were at the outset. But now I have fully established the location of his headquarters, and I am on the point of invading his private domain. That is why I wish to talk with you."

The young man's eyes had the look of the falcon unhooded, unleashed, with the quarry in view.

"I am flattered," he said. "I hope you are going to let me participate in the invasion."

"It will be better, I think, for me to make the first trip alone." Then, noticing the obvious disappointment in his companion's face: "But I want your cooperation. I am going to ask you to accompany me to the outskirts of the forbidden territory, and to cooperate from the coign of vantage of a tree-top."

"A tree-top? That sounds interesting. It suggests that we are to get into the country." The tone was a little dubious.

"Less than a hundred miles from New York. Yet into a territory that will seem like a wilderness to you. You know, I believe, that I have a farm in Connecticut, in the foot-hills of the Berkshires. Well, this farm includes a stretch of woodland adjoining Count X's mysterious domain. In fact, that was why I purchased it. It is typical New England territory, with outcropping rocks in the foreground, and a woodland of tangled underbrush, interspersed with big trees, in the background.

"But there is a splendid trout-stream"—he dwelt lovingly on the words—"and an old abandoned mill where I have erected a radio plant that is a very important accessory from the standpoint of our present pursuit. In fact, it enabled me to locate the count."

THE face of the younger man expressed frank surprise. He reflected a moment before he said: "I do not at all understand. How did your radio apparatus enable you to locate the count or anybody else? As I understand it, the radiations of a wireless apparatus are sent out into space in all directions, and a person receiving them can have no notion as to the direction from which they come. Is not that true?"

"It was formerly true, and, as regards the radiations going out in all directions, that of course is still true. Nothing very definite in the way of aiming the radiations, so to speak, has yet been accomplished. But a great deal has been accomplished in the way of determining at the receiving station the precise direction from which the radiations come.

"The principle is very simple. If you have a horizontal antenna, or receiving wire, adjusted so that it can be revolved in the horizontal plane about its center, it will be found that the ethereal vibrations, translated into sound, are most intense if the receiving wire is at a right angle to the direction of flight of the ethereal vibrations in question. By listening as the wire is turned about and charting a line at right angles to the direction of the wire when the sound is loudest, the exact direction of the sending station is located."

"Does the observation tell also of the distance of the sending station?"

"Unfortunately not. But, by having a second receiving station at a little distance, and similarly charting the direction of the sending station from that, you triangulate the space just as an ordinary surveyor does, or an ordnance officer in locating a hostile battery or a ship, and thus answer the distance question."

"And have you done this in the case of the count's radio station?" Willoughby's interest was focalizing.

"Without difficulty, by utilizing an old barn standing half a mile or so from the old mill as a second station. The radio plant of which we are in quest is located on a hilltop in the midst of a heavy woodland that is contiguous to the woodland on my own place."

"Two or three hundred acres of woodland, including this hill, are enclosed with a high, closely meshed wire fence, designed, so it is alleged, to keep deer, foxes and other wild animals from escaping. The country folks hereabouts know this woodland as a game-preserve. Of course they have no notion that it is really something very different, and that the actual object of the fence is to keep trespassers out."

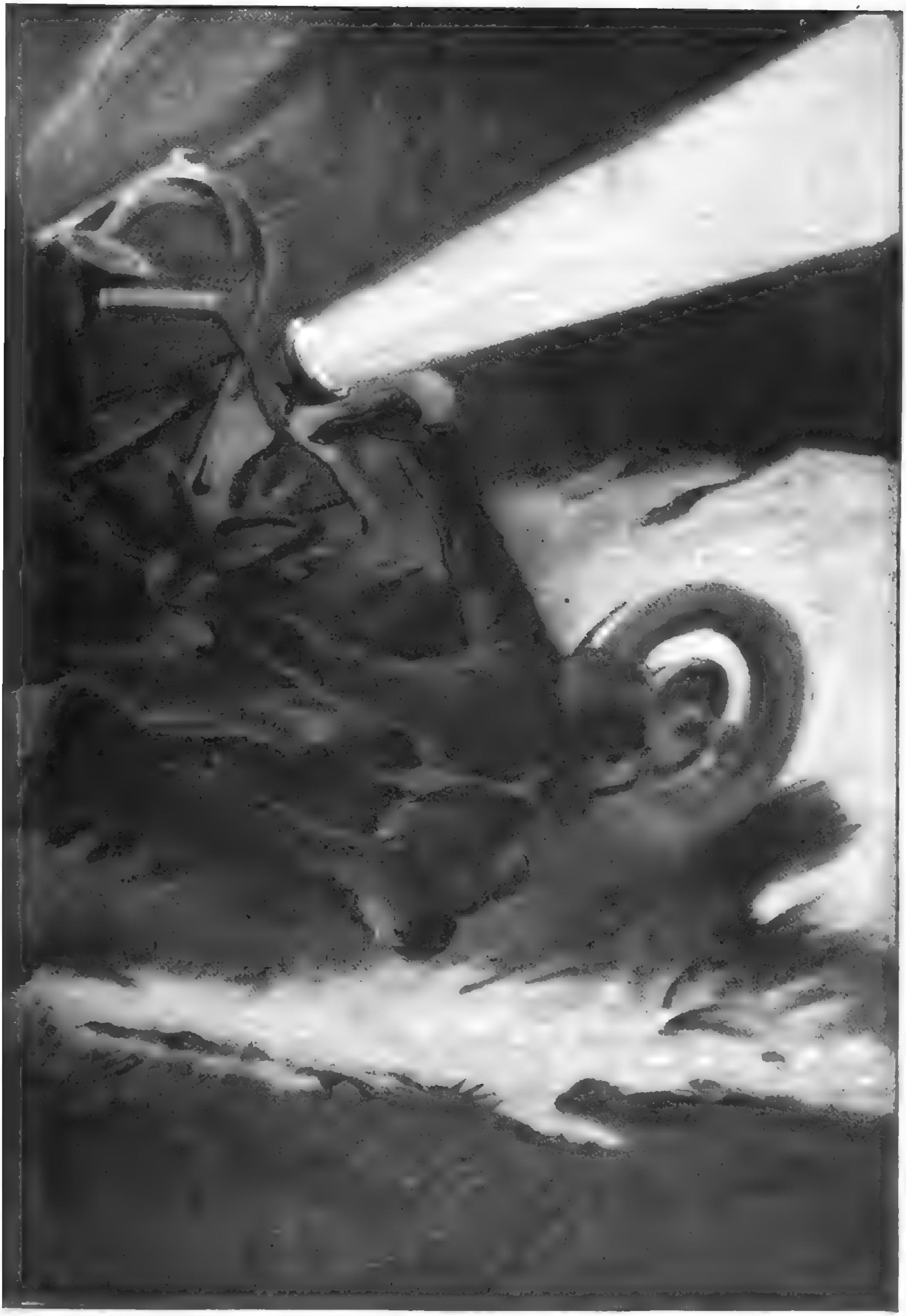
"But what is the main object of the count's activities? Why this radio plant out there in the wilderness?"

"I can answer that only in part. I hope to be able to give a much fuller answer after I make my tour of discovery next week."

"You must let me join you."

"I think it will be wiser to go alone, at any rate on the first trip. You see what happened to Angus and Warpole; and you know that Jirtle, who was operating with them, has disappeared. The chances are that he will never be seen alive again. Count X and his confederates stop at nothing, as the fate of these men show. There is reason to believe that the automobile disaster that resulted in the death of Gustave

Another instant, and the roar of the motors was merged in a frightful crash; the grinding crash ble
there remained one tangled mass of wreckage. A little flicker of fl



h an explosion—a series of explosions. A moment before there had been two beautiful racing cars;
t up; and instantly the wreckage was revealed in a sheet of fire.

Beuscher and his wife and Frederick Mayten about three weeks ago is also to be charged against the count."

"Incredible! I don't understand that at all."

"At the moment, I will not attempt to explain. It is possible even that my surmise may be wrong. But that also is something I shall know more about after I have made my informal call on the count. Meantime, I will let you know just how you can aid me."

THE medical examiner, his plans completed, had chosen for his dangerous enterprise a night in early July when the moon would be at the full.

A highly important feature of his equipment consisted of a small electric battery of peculiar construction, adjusted as a sort of belt about his waist and connected with sets of spiral wires sewed loosely into the lining of his hunting-jacket coiled from the shoulder to the wrist of each sleeve.

These coils of wire would serve as antennæ to receive wireless messages, being connected with a pair of auriculars permanently adjusted in a hood that could be quickly drawn over the head and thus brought in contact with the ears.

The wearer of this outfit thus carried with him a wireless receiving outfit. By extending his arms and revolving his body slowly, he could gain a fair general idea of the direction of any sending station from which messages came. And by unwinding a coil of wire adjusted at the back of the coat and attaching the wire to a limb of a tree, he could even develop an antenna from which messages could be sent out to a short distance. Dr. Goodrich's expectation, however, was to use the apparatus only to receive messages, chiefly to guide him through the rocky and hilly woodland, and also to give him possible clues to the activities of his antagonists in event of their becoming aware of his presence.

"Why do you select a moonlight night?" Willoughby asked.

"Because it has every advantage. When the moon is shining you can see a little way about you even in the deepest woodland. Yet you can make yourself instantly invisible by standing close to a tree-trunk on the dark side, or getting into the shadow of a hemlock. I hope to approach very near to this radio plant and whatever other strange things there may be on that hill without being observed."

Willoughby had assumed that Dr. Goodrich intended to cut a hole in the fence at some convenient point in order to gain entrance to what he described as "no man's land." But the physician explained that such a procedure would be inadmissable, as the fence was electrified and such action might convey a report to a central plant.

"I shall not go through it but over it. There is a big hickory tree near the fence down there in my woodland, and Jack Handly, the young man who is operating the wireless, will go up it with the aid of a pair of telephone-climbers, and carry up a rope ladder. I will go up the ladder and then haul it up and readjust it from a limb that overhangs the fence. I can then descend on the other side without difficulty—also get back again when the time comes.

"Meantime, Jack will drop a wire to serve as an aerial, and the little battery in a bag at the foot of the tree will complete the wireless outfit. Incidentally"—the narrator came suddenly back to present time and actual surroundings—"we have permission to tune our apparatus in the key of the government station over there at Sayville, and if the people on the hill pick up any of our messages, as doubtless they will, they will imagine that they recognize them as coming from that source. Jack and I have, of course, arranged a code-system that will say nothing intelligible to the other man."

"And where do I come in?" asked Willoughby.

"You are the emergency service, perched with Jack in a commodious and convenient crotch of the hickory tree, ready to come to my aid if I should signal that I need you."

"But why not let me go with you?"

"I think it wiser not to. You are not the experienced woodsman that I am, and in any event a lone scout has much better chance of making a reconnaisance unobserved. I think I can handle the situation by myself, and I am not sure that I would suggest having you even in the background there were it not for the possibility that I may capture a prisoner or two and ultimately need a little aid in handling them."

The preliminary plans were carried out according to schedule, and it was not much after nine o'clock when Dr. Goodrich briskly descended the rope ladder, waved his hand to his watchers in the tree, and with quick but cautious tread made his way into the woodland and started up the rugged hillside in the general direction of the radio plant.

The full moon was just coming above the top of the hill that lay off to the east of the one Dr. Goodrich was ascending. Shafts of the misty, opalescent half-light lay here and there against tree-trunks or cut irregular lines along the leaf-covered earth or swathed the ragged faces of the outcropping rocks. But in the main the thick woodland through which he was making his way was wrapped in darkness.

At the foot of the hill where Dr. Goodrich had entered on his project there are giant hemlocks and noble hickories, sparsely enough dispersed so that great masses of laurel fill in the spaces between their trunks. On various terraces as he progressed upward, he passed sometimes through clumps of laurel and patches of clawing briers; sometimes through open spaces with large tree-trunks colonnaded at intervals of many yards, sometimes skirting about the charred trunks of souvenirs of an ancient forest fire and sometimes, especially at the top of the more abrupt ledges, amidst groups of hemlocks with trunks two or three feet in diameter.

From the vantage-ground of such an alcove on successive terraces, always higher and higher, the explorer would take his bearings, drawing the hood with its necromantic ear-pieces about his head, and stretching out his arms to extend the coiled antenna, and thus tapping the ethereal vibrations.

The air was vibrant with messages, but none that was significant for his present purpose. The radio station on the hilltop, toward which he was slowly making his way, was for the time being silent. And the youth in the tree-top, down there in the valley, had been instructed to send out no messages until three full hours had elapsed, unless in response to a message sent to him.

Not much more than a half-hour after he had descended the rope ladder and found a footing in the forbidden territory, Goodrich had made his tortuous and laborious way from ledge to ledge and through all the successive barriers of vegetation to a little plateau well toward the top of the hill—a nearly level space perhaps a hundred yards in extent and a hundred feet in breadth, flanked on one side by a precipice dropping like a wall a hundred feet or more, and on the other side by a bluff rising, also wall-like, another hundred feet.

It seemed to be a natural clearing, yet Dr. Goodrich sensed instantly that it was a place utilized in a different way from any of the terraces that he had crossed.

He crept cautiously forward in the shadow of a hemlock and crouched behind a gigantic boulder that stood guard just as at the edge of the precipice, there at the border of the little plateau.

Step by step, and as silently as a fox or a deer moves through the woodland, the invader groped his way, always in the shadow, until he came to another outcropping rock which lay snug against the base of the cliff at about the center of the terrace.

Peering cautiously about, he saw that on the other side of it there was a patch of blacker darkness in the face of the cliff, which he interpreted as the entrance to a cave.

FOR some minutes Dr. Goodrich lay flat on his face, huddled against the boulder peering into this dark entrance and listening intently.

He adjusted the hood about his head and brought forward a little tube which under manipulation expanded into trumpet-shape, which he projected in the direction of the opening.

The apparatus was in reality a sound-magnifier consisting essentially of an audion or vacuum amplifier—so condensed a mechanism that it can be carried in the pocket, yet so delicate a detector of ordinary sounds that it makes the merest whisper audible at a distance of many yards.

For a little time longer, with senses thus preternaturally alive, he lay and listened. But no sound came from the cave entrance. The entire hillside was wrapped in silence.

Satisfied that no one was there, the physician got up, readjusted the auditory mechanisms and spread out his arms, slowly revolving until he had faced in every direction.

The flute-notes of wireless messages from half a dozen stations between Maine and Annapolis came to him. Strange ndeed it seemed that one should stand here, alone, in a wooded wilderness, and interpret the thoughts of men in a practical world as remote-seeming as if it belonged to another era or another planet.

But here no vagrant thoughts were allowed. The listener was searching the ether only for sounds that might arise from a radio plant that he knew to be a few hundred yards away. As that was silent, the ether had no message that he cared to receive at the moment. So he readjusted his auditory mechanism, again making use of the trumpet-shaped apparatus, and with his right hand in his side-pocket grasping a pistol that rested lightly there, and with left hand slightly extended holding a flashlight, he very slowly and cautiously advanced into the mouth of the cavern.

THE opening for a few yards seemed only a natural fissure in the rocks; then it turned sharply to the right, and, winding about, curved to the left again, the entire passage being only about three feet wide.

But now the opening was suddenly expanded into an irregular cavern, perhaps thirty feet in length and half as wide. From glimpses revealed in the flashes of the search-light, it was evident that the work of unaided nature was no longer in question.

At the entrance to the room a movable structure appeared which, when examined, was shown to be adjusted on hinges in such a way it could move like a door and close the passage altogether. And the surface of this primitive door was modeled in irregular contour, and so painted as to have the appearance of the rock. itself. Had any one come there at a time when this door was closed, the impression would have been gained that one had come to the end of the passageway.

Fortunately the door was now open and Dr. Goodrich was able to step into the large cavern and to pass on across it and enter another doorway off at the side.

A similar door guarded the second entrance and, like the other, it was open.

The physician now advanced very cautiously indeed, yet expeditiously; for he inferred that the cave had been, in all probability, very recently vacated, and that whoever had gone out and left the doors open might return at any moment. At all events, he could hardly hope to be undiscovered if he remained long in the cave, and he was extremely anxious to find out its contents.

His curiosity was immediately gratified. Just within the room which met his view when he stepped through the second doorway he saw, as he flashed his search-light about, an electric button on the wall. And as he touched this, the cave was illuminated brilliantly.

A glance showed that it was a room of extraordinary character, quite aside from the fact of its amazing location, there in the depths of a cliff in a woodland wilderness.

To the trained eye of the physician, it was revealed as a laboratory of intricate equipment. A glance showed elaborate electrical apparatus on one side of the room of a character that could only be determined by closer inspection—on the other side of the room an array of bottles and test-tubes and pipes and conduits characteristic of a chemical laboratory.

At the far end of the room, another table revealed two or three microscopes and an array of test-tubes suggestive of a bacteriological laboratory.

Telephones and electrical devices obviously having to do with a wireless apparatus on a table in the center of the room completed the hasty inventory.

Hardly pausing, but taking in as much as he might of the strange equipment of this mysterious cave, the physician immediately crossed the room and peered through yet another doorway.

And there he saw a third room, smaller than the others, but even stranger in its equipment—a room having the appearance of the boudoir of a woman of esthetic tastes and luxurious habits.

The physician flashed his light about the room, and was on the point of touching an electric button when his eye fell on something that caused him to withdraw his hand and release the catch of his search-light, restoring the boudoir to darkness.

Revealed for an instant in the light of his lamp and now only vaguely outlined in the dim light that filtered through the door from the laboratory was the form of a woman lying on a luxurious divan over at one side of the room.

The fleeting glance had revealed her but vaguely, yet sufficiently to give the impression of rounded cheeks, voluptuous lips, long lashes veiling the closed eyes, and a luxuriant mass of dark hair that pillowed the head and lay in a wavy veil across the silken coverlet that draped the reclining figure.

Pausing an instant only to make sure that the sleeper was not roused, the physician retreated cautiously across the laboratory room. He switched off the light, made his way to the entrance door, and out through the tortuous fissure.

He had learned enough to serve as the basis for a future reconnaissance of less fugitive character. It seemed obviously the point of wisdom to get away from the cave as expeditiously as possible and continue his journey of exploration farther up the hillside.

But now as he came out of the cave entrance and glanced across the terrace, he was made instantly aware that this project was about to be interfered with.

For, not twenty yards away and coming directly toward him, he beheld the figure of a man.

Standing within the mouth of the cave, the physician was for the moment invisible to the oncomer, but he realized that discovery was inevitable. So without a moment's hesitation he stepped clear of the cave and moved a pace or two to the right, still keeping within the shadow.

Instinctively he had collapsed the audion trumpet and buttoned his hunting-coat so that it was snug about him. The hood with its artificial ears had been slipped off and was held tightly at his back so that his head was free.

His left hand was slightly forward, lightly clenched, as a boxer instinctively holds it. His right hand rested with seeming casualness in the pocket of his coat.

Thus he was on the alert, yet there was nothing in his attitude to suggest aggressiveness. It was the attitude of an alert, keen-minded, courageous man, prepared absolutely for any emergency.

And now the oncomer, as he came around a boulder, saw the physician standing there and stopped dead in his tracks.

"Good-evening!" cried the doctor jovially. "Fine night, isn't it?"

"Gott im Himmel!" gasped the other.

It was evident that the man was too much astonished for quick thinking and that he had not the automatic habit of aggressive action. For a few seconds he stood perfectly still, thus giving Dr. Goodrich time to appraise him. The physician noted that this was a bulky but not very muscular or athletic young man, cast in the Teutonic mold.

He made no movement with either hand toward a hip-pocket. Instead, he backed away a little until he came beside the boulder and then reached down and seized what appeared to be a club about two feet long. Raising this in both hands, he now advanced with the obvious intent of braining his opponent.

Stooping a little, the physican sprang lightly forward, thrusting his left hand almost directly above his head and a little forward, to parry the blow, while at the same instant he brought his right hand swinging like a fast-moving pendulum from the hip, landing his fist squarely on the point of the Teuton's jaw. The upper cut landed in time to nullify the club-thrust, and the uneven contest was over almost before it had begun.

The club fell from the man's relaxed hands; the knees that supported his corpulent body sagged; the legs were helpless. The man's head dropped forward; his arms flapped limply down, and his body settled to the ground and extended itself in a sort of jellyfish fashion.

HAVING rendered his assailant temporarily helpless, Dr. Goodrich now proceeded to insure his more protracted harmlessness by binding his hands and feet and tying a handkerchief about his face, with a large knot in his mouth.

He then dragged the prostrate form of the Teuton, who was just beginning to recover consciousness, into the shadow of the boulder.

Then the physician hastily, but as always silently, retraced his steps along the border of the cliff and prepared to continue his exploration.

Just short of the crest of the hill, and hidden from view except at closest range by a clump of thick-growing hemlocks, he came on another evidence of human activities even more startling than the cave he had just visited. And here he was witness, as chance would have it, of an act which he himself characterized—in an official report—as the commission of the most remarkable crime that has ever come to his attention in the long period of his active experience as an alienist and criminologist.

What he actually saw, however, had no appearance of the spectacular; and to understand the extraordinary nature of the deed in question, it will be necessary to turn for a time from the strange environment into which we have gone with the physician and observe developments of a little human drama that was being enacted in a certain house that stands at the top of a bluff overlooking the water on the north shore of Long Island, just about sixty miles distant, as the crow flies, from the strangely peopled wooded hilltop where Dr. Goodrich was making his startling observations.

The tragedy that befell in that Long Island house was of such character that, in all probability, it would never have been revealed to the authorities, or perhaps even suspected, had not Dr. Goodrich chanced to select that particular evening, and even a particular hour of that evening, for his invasion of the haunted woodland up there in Connecticut.

THE moon was about two hours high that night when a big yellow racing car came swiftly along the road leading through the scrub-oak not far from the little village of Shoreham on Long Island and turned in at a rustic gateway. It made its way more slowly up the little incline, along a narrow and tortuous road-bed, to the door of the bungalow on the cliff.

The house itself, even in the daytime, is quite invisible from the main road, owing to the thick growth of oaks and cedars. But on the water-side it is quite exposed and plainly visible from a boat, even far out on the Sound. It is painted white, and against the dark background of the woodland greens it might probably be seen by an air-plane voyager—at any rate by one equipped with a good pair of binoculars—flying over the Connecticut mainland.

A man and woman descended from the car, leaving the machine standing under the porte-cochère.

They advanced up the little stairway and across the broad veranda without a moment's hesitation, and the man opened the door with a key.

A moment later he switched on the light, revealing a room extending the whole length of the house, with a big stone fireplace at one side and a simple but adequate equipment of furniture that suggested an owner of wealth and refinement.

The man went quickly across the room and through a door leading into a much smaller room, furnished as a library, with a single window facing the water, and no door except the one through which he entered. As soon as he had switched on the light there, the woman turned off the light in the main room and followed him, closing the library door after her.

The single window of the library was heavily curtained and the light was dim, furnished by a single bulb on a shaded lamp.

The man was tall, of muscular build, but quick and agile of movement. His hair was perhaps prematurely gray, for the cut of his features and the trimness of his well-groomed figure suggested one in the late thirties—in the full prime of manhood.

He had a military bearing, and by all conventional standards he was a very handsome man, of the type in which masculinity is nicely balanced by intellectuality.

The eyes alone would have made their owner conspicuous in any company. For an angry mood, they might cause even a brave man to falter. Glowing with another light, those eyes might make the heart of even an unemotional woman beat faster. Of the moral force—using the term in its broadest sense—back of those eyes there could be no question. But whether the actual expression of that force had led to a life that by conventional standards would be called moral might well be doubted. The obdurate will evidenced in the jaws, clenched even in repose, coupled with such attributes of physical passion and intellectual power as that face revealed, might lead either to heroic conquests or to acts of lawless aggression or unqualified fanaticism.

As soon as he was seated he launched into a volley of words which were apologetic in tone and couched in terms of endearment.

"I do not blame you for being impatient, sweetheart," he said. "But you must be reasonable. You know that Rome was not built in a day."

The girl had seated herself on the corner of a table in the center of the room, facing her companion. She was dressed in a khaki outfit like a uniform. A particularly jaunty visorless cap revealed masses of fluffy amber-colored hair only partly held in place by a motor-veil.

"That, I believe, is the tradition," she said, after an interval; "but it might be unbuilt in a day, which is more to the point."

"By a great conflagration, yes. But Katherine, you know we do not wish to start a great conflagration."

"*We* do not? Speak for yourself, please. How do you know what I wish to do?"

The man sprang to his feet and stepped quickly forward.

"Good God, Pusskin, don't say things like that!" he cried, with a note of plaintiveness, almost of entreaty. He raised his hands a little until her face was upturned; then he stooped forward and kissed her.

Her shoulders quivered a little and the deep breaths she drew gave evidence of suppressed emotion.

"When will you send her away?" she murmured presently.

"Sweetheart, you know the difficulty. You know how all but impossible it is to send her until she is ready to go."

"You did not talk like that a month ago."

"Things have changed within a month."

The girl drew her head back quickly and her eyes suddenly flashed into his.

"Do I need to be told that things have changed?" she cried.

"I do not mean that, sweetheart." His eyes were tender, compassionate. "You know what I mean."

"Yes; I know very well what you mean." The voice suggested tears. But the eyes were still flashing, though now averted. "You mean that now you have me completely under your control, and that you can do as you please," she faltered.

The man dropped his hands to his side, shrugged his shoulders, and, turning, strode back and forth, muttering to himself.

As the girl regarded him, her eyes were softening. Presently she slipped down from the table and stood there with her arms a little extended. Her face glowed with a strange, exultant expression, spontaneous, all-revealing.

"Forgive me, Ernest," she said, in a very low voice. "I do not mean to be unreasonable. I know how difficult things are."

The man turned eagerly and took the girl in his arms. "Ah, now you are your true self again, beloved," he murmured.

All sternness was gone from his voice. Every line of his face had softened. No trace of asceticism remained. His eyes irradiated tenderness. And there was infinite tenderness in his voice as he whispered: "*Ich liebe dich. Ach, wie lieb' ich dich!*"

"And I love you," the girl whispered with tremulous voice.

Her face was turned up eagerly, expectantly. Her lips were half parted; her eyes were gleaming.

But just as the man's face was lowered to hers, a low, flutelike sound was heard that, despite its actual softness, came with startling emphasis, breaking in on the brooding silence of the night.

THE man and the girl drew suddenly apart, as if some human witness had come to interfere with their reconciliation.

"You must answer," said the man. He gestured impatiently. His voice was still vibrant; his eyes were glowing, but their look of tenderness was not unmixed with apprehension. The lines of his face hardened a little, and there was something now in his instant change of bearing that suggested response to a command, a challenged authority.

"But why should we notice it?" the girl whispered. The color had left her cheeks. Her eyes had a startled look.

"It might be something important. It must be, or they would not call at this hour." He glanced up at the clock. "You see it is almost ten. But they must not know I am here. Tell them you have not seen me since last week, and ask if anything is wrong."

"I am afraid to answer, Ernest." The voice was pleading in its tone.

"Afraid of what, sweetheart?"

"I hardly know. I feel apprehensive. But of course that is foolishness." She made a brave effort at smiling.

"Assuredly it is. Answer them very briefly. Then I hope we shall not be interrupted again."

The girl hesitated a moment longer, and then stepped quickly to a little desk at one side of the room, and, seating herself, adjusted a head-piece, with auriculars not unlike those used by a telephone operator. She spoke in a low voice into a little tube:

"What is wanted? . . . Yes—no; not for several days . . . Yes; quite alone."

The man was standing at a little distance, regarding the girl intently and with obvious admiration. The look of eager expectancy had come back to his face. His cheeks, already bronzed from exposure, were now a little suffused with blood, and in his eyes was the light that smolders when a man looks on something alluring, desirable, soon to be possessed.

Then on the instant the man was transformed. His face blanched; a look of horror came into his eyes, and a half-articulate groan escaped his lips.

The girl, even as she spoke, had suddenly lurched forward. Her entire body was convulsed. From her drawn lips came an agonized groan—hardly of human quality—automatic, haunting. No other sound.

Then, after a moment, the convulsive movement ceased. The girl's body relaxed and settled back and slid from the chair and, limp and unresisting, rolled to the floor and lay there.

THE man sprang forward, stretching out his hands. He drew them back just in time. Even in that critical moment, his wits had not deserted him.

He turned, and in three strides was at the door. But just as he reached it, there was a curiously sharp click, seeming to come from the door itself.

He knew the import of that sound. He knew that an automatic lock had been sprung in the door—a lock altogether dissociated from the ordinary one operated by a key. And he knew that no power of his would avail to unlock the door and that no force he could apply would break it.

He did not touch the handle of the door. But he stepped swiftly to the table and pulled out a drawer, found there a pair of rubber gloves and slipped them on. There were various tools in the drawer. He seized a long-handled pair of wire-cutters and, holding these carefully in his gloved hands, he went to the side of the room where the girl's body lay and leaned over very cautiously and thrust the implement back of the little desk and clapped it on an invisible wire, the exact location of which was apparently well known to him.

A crunching sound told that the wire had been cut. That accomplished, the man dropped the implement and leaned over the body of the girl. He put his ear to her chest, but with the air of one who acts automatically, knowing well that no sound will be heard.

A moment later he gathered the limp form in his arms and laid it tenderly on a couch at the other side of the room. Then he knelt beside the couch and, with arms clasped about the unresponsive body, he buried his face in the pillow, his cheek against that scarcely paler one, his form as motionless as that other lifeless form.

For some minutes he remained there, motionless, except for the occasional heaving of his shoulders. Then he seemed to have his emotion under control, for he got up quietly and stood with folded arms looking down upon the form that, just before, had been, in his eyes, the most beautiful and the most alluring of living beings, and now——

Presently he roused himself out of the lethargy, and he turned and walked across the room and stood near the window.

It was not that he had any thought of escape by that channel. He knew that no power at his present command could break through the meshes of the ornamental grill-work of chrome steel that he himself had placed to guard that window against the entrance of any intruder—or the exit of any prisoner. Neither by window nor door could he escape from that room—and certainly not through the wall, attacked by any implement at hand.

Grief had now for the moment given way to solicitude and anger.

It could not justly be said that the man's solicitude was tinctured by fear. His life had been a life of hazard. He had defied the law in too many ways and for too long a period to leave any doubt as to his courage. For the man who acts as a spy in a foreign country in time of war, the man who carries out successive infringements of the law ranging from the counterfeiting of money to carefully calculated murder, must be a man of courage, however lacking he may be in almost every other admirable trait.

And Count Ernest von Griffon was such

a man. The calmness with which he conducted himself in the emergency that now presented gave evidence of the moral stamina that determines the activities in times of crisis of great heroes—and great criminals.

He was hoist by his own petard. That was obvious enough—caught in a trap of his own making. He knew very well who had sprung the trap. Also, he would know very well how to reckon with her—provided he escaped.

He stalked back and forth, his hands behind his back, as one who contemplates a hard problem.

But from the outset he knew the answer. To escape by force was not possible. Only one refuge remained—diplomacy.

FROM one source alone could a specially selected or "tuned" ethereal vibration be sent out to which that secret lock would respond. He must appeal to that source. Almost from the outset he had decided on that appeal. He delayed only that he might get himself well in hand. He must control his voice. He must dissemble.

As he walked, he began speaking in a low tone, merely to test his voice. He keyed it down until it had no stridency. He forced a little laugh.

"I think I can manage it now," he said presently, in a clear, even tone.

But the expression of his face was not pleasant to see. The even tone of his voice was a testimonial to the power of will that was holding his emotions in check. The voice-control proved adequate when put to the crucial test; and a few minutes later a clicking sound was again heard in the door and Count von Griffon knew that he was free. He lost no time in turning the handle and throwing the door wide open.

That accomplished, he seemed for a time to lose all control of himself. All the calmness of manner left him. He became as a frenzied creature, pacing up and down the room with clenched fists, muttering and even shouting execrations. The pent-up emotions burst forth utterly uncontrolled.

But presently the storm spent itself, and the angry man, his face still like a thundercloud, stopped short and turned toward the couch where the form that had been the woman he loved lay supine.

Again the man came forward and knelt beside the couch. All trace of anger had gone from his face now, leaving it tense with anguish. For a time he gave way to uncontrolled grief. Then his face became stern. He clenched his hands, came to his feet and stood erect and soldierlike.

He paced backward and forward slowly, meditating. Soon he had reached a decision, and he translated his thoughts into action without another moment's delay.

He had switched out the light in the little room and now he went through the door and across the large room and opened the outside door and left it ajar. The full moon shone through a window of the large room at one end, giving sufficient light to make everything visible. But the veranda and the road outside on either side of the porte-cochère were in the deep shadow of the oaks and cedars. He went cautiously from one end of the veranda to the other; then, apparently satisfied that the coast was clear, he walked swiftly across the lawn to a detached garage.

He unlocked the garage and went in. A few moments later he drove out in a small runabout, which he directed across the lawn until it came to the very brink of the bluff overhanging the water.

Leaving the car there, he returned to the house and went directly into the little library.

Without a moment's hesitation he took up the lifeless form lying there on the couch as if it had been the body of a child, and carried it out of the room, across the other room and down the steps. Without pause he walked swiftly around the house on the shady side and, keeping in the shadow of the trees, went along the path to a little summer-house at the edge of the cliff.

He stopped just a moment here to look this way and that along the beach. Satisfied that no one was there, he swiftly descended the long flight of stairs leading down to the water level. Crossing the narrow strip of gravel, he came to a boathouse. It was the work of but a moment to unlock the door and enter the little house. Another moment, and the lifeless form had been deposited gently in the bottom of the motor-boat that lay there in the water with bow toward the door at the other end of the little structure.

That part of his project accomplished,

the man seemed loath to make the next move. He was kneeling on the platform beside the boat and gently stroking the hair of the head that lay back against a little cushion.

He stooped forward and kissed the hair and the forehead, the cheeks, and then the unresponsive lips, and again for a little time he was given over to emotion.

Then as before he controlled himself with a supreme effort, and his capacity for mental detachment revealed itself in his succeeding actions. He took from his pocket a pair of gloves, and one he tossed down on the landing at his feet. And beside it he laid the cap that the girl had worn, which, with the gloves, he had taken from the table, evidently following a preconceived plan.

Now he touched a button and the outward doors of the little boat-house swung slowly open.

Again for a moment the man seemed to hesitate. He was still holding one glove, and he made a move as if to put it in his pocket. But instead he thrust out his hand quickly and dropped the glove where it fell at the edge of the platform of the boat-house. Then he descended the steps and made his way across the gravelly beach, up the stairway and back to the house.

He went inside and looked about carefully to make sure that no evidence remained of the strange happenings of that fateful hour. As he entered, the clock was striking.

"Good God!" he muttered. "Is it only ten o'clock?"

He paused, staring vacantly at the couch where the dead girl had lain.

"God in Heaven!" he murmured presently. "What things can happen in half an hour!" He muttered the words over and over. "*Eine halbe Stunde! Ach, lieber Gott! Was für ein halbe Stunde war das!*"

His face was drawn, distorted, haggard. It was the face of one whose spirit, overwhelmed by the poignancy of hopeless grief, is concentrating its every energy, focalizing its every motion on a single, mad, insensate purpose: the intent to kill—to kill—to kill!

"Accursed fiend! Devil incarnate!" he raged. "She has sown the wind; she shall reap the whirlwind."

The fury of words ended in guttural, inarticulate mumblings of rage; a wild incoherence of frenzy.

Then, as before, the fire of passion seemed to burn itself out suddenly. The madman became quiet, composed, outwardly serene. The distorted face relaxed. A leering half-smile overspread his features. But the smile was more terrifying, more malevolent, if that could be, than the look of unmasked hatred that it supplanted.

A few moments more the man stood there. Then he closed the library door and went out and locked the outer door. He got into the yellow car and drove at full speed out into the main road, and crossed it, and entered a branch road leading almost directly southward toward the center of the island.

As the yellow car, impelled at top speed by the distracted driver, came out into the main road and hurtled across it, it chanced that old Uncle Wallace Bishop—bent of form and venerable of beard—was walking leisurely along the highway.

AS UNCLE WALLACE told his experience afterward, he would have given no thought in particular to the yellow car as it dashed out of Mr. Griffin's place there on the cliff except that he had the impression that the owner of the place was away—"over in Europe, or somewhere"—and that the house was closed for the summer.

Even at that, he possibly would have given the matter no special concern. But there was another thing that struck him. It came to him that the yellow car was just like the one he had seen down there on the deserted road a month or so ago—yes; it was just at the time of the last full moon—the strange antics of which had filled him with wonderment. He had never told a word of what he saw that night to any one but Dr. Goodrich—for he knew he wouldn't be believed.

But now the thing came back to him vividly, and he knew this for the same car. Only, now, of course, it had a driver, like any other car. The driver did not so much as see him apparently; but he got a perfectly clear view of the driver's face in the moonlight as the car shot by. And it puzzled him.

"I seen at once that it was Mr. Griffin himself," he said, in telling about it afterward. "And then afterward I wasn't sure of it. It was him, and yet it wasn't him. I know him well, for I have done many a day's work for him, cuttin' grass and things. And at that, do you know, I wouldn't swear right now whether it was him or not. You know he was always kind of a full-blooded man—healthy lookin'; and the man in that car was white like a ghost."

When he reached this point of his narrative—as he had occasion to tell it over and over on successive occasions the next day—Uncle Wallace's voice always took on a tone of confidence.

"And accordin' to what we know now, a ghost is just what it was. What I seen in that car wa'n't any livin' person. It was Mr. Griffin's ghost."

Then Uncle Wallace would go on to tell that, even at the time, he had a strong suspicion that the white-faced figure that drove the car so recklessly was not a mortal, despite its seeming corporeality; and that this suspicion had become a certainty in his mind when, ten or fifteen minutes later, he had met the yellow car coming back, still at high speed, and had stepped aside into the shadow of the scrub-oaks to let it pass, the road being narrow; and then he had seen with his own eyes, still as plain as day, that there was no one in the car at all.

"It was runnin' without any driver, just as it did that other time. I didn't say nothin' about it before, except to Dr. Goodrich. I didn't dast to, because I knew everybody would laugh at me."

The phantom car, quite driverless, had passed Uncle Wallace there on the lonely road as he said it had; but had he turned about and followed it, he might have seen it continue on its strange pilgrimage until it crossed the main highway and entered the private road leading up to the dwelling of Count von Griffon—known to his neighbors as "Mr. Griffin"—there on the cliff, and on under the porte-cochère and along the road to the garage, and directly through the door of the garage, quite as if some one had driven it.

Nor was corroborative evidence lacking, for it was matter of common knowledge that the car was found, when the authorities came to make search, securely locked in Mr. Griffin's garage.

And the tracks of the car were out there in the road for all to see.

And Mr. Griffin himself, as every one knew that read the papers, was dead, as a result of an accident, over there at his country place in Connecticut—more than two hundred miles away by the shortest road—having met his death, as nearly as could be reckoned, at just about the very time when Uncle Wallace saw his apparition driving away from his Long Island dwelling.

A ghostly, incredible business? All of that; but facts are facts.

STRANGE happenings, surely. Yet not more strange than other things that came to pass simultaneously down in the boat-house where the form of that beautiful young woman was stiffening in death.

The entire shore seemed absolutely deserted. And yet, of a sudden, without premonition or warning, the propeller of the boat in which the dead girl lay began to revolve. The boat pushed quickly forward and in a moment was driving directly out into the Sound, the water splashing about its bow and churned into foam at the stern as the craft sped forward. The boat bore straight on, breasting the little waves that danced and sparkled in the moonlight, for about a mile due north, and then began veering in a quartering direction toward the east and, rushing at full speed, bore on and on, directly out toward the center of the Sound.

Then when the little craft had come far out into the center of the channel, some miles from shore, a mere cockleshell now in a waste of water, its bow suddenly headed downward, so that it dived under the next wave a little, and then deeper and deeper; and the water flooded in until it flowed gently about the form of the sleeper.

Now the stern of the boat rose in the air a little, and the propeller hummed its requiem in a new key as it swung free of the water. The little funeral craft, with its fair burden, poised for a moment and then slid gently downward far and farther into the cool, dark stillness of the abysmal waters. Thus, in weird isolation, under the moon and stars, with but a single human witness, the strangest of all strange burials at sea was consummated.

And fifty miles away (as the crow flies), in a strangely equipped room of a house in the haunted wood over there in Connecticut, a woman sat gloating, with eyes shining, face leering—because she knew that the rival who had taken from her the affection of the man she once had worshiped was a rival no longer.

I WISH that the story of what Dr. Goodrich heard and saw on the hilltop in the haunted woodland the night the strange tragedy was being enacted in the house over on Long Island, might be told here entirely in his own words.

No member of the little group of confidants who heard the story from his lips, on a memorable evening about ten days later, will ever forget the occasion. We had come by prearrangement to his apartment and were grouped mostly at one corner of the big study.

The doctor himself was sitting at first at his desk at one side of the room. But he did not long remain there. As he warmed to his subject, he was on his feet, pantomiming the successive scenes in delightful fashion.

We may take up the story at the point where we left the physician in the shadow of a clump of hemlocks up there near the top of the strangely peopled hillside, toward the climax of his eventful pilgrimage—from which curious coign of vantage he became witness, as has been said, of one of the most extraordinary crimes ever committed.

As to the sense in which the word "witness" is here used, the physician's own narrative will best explain.

"I was lying snug along the ground, shielded from view by overhanging hemlock branches," he said, "with my arms outstretched to catch any wireless signal, and with the telephone adjustment keyed in unison with the sending station on the hill, as I had previously gaged it, when the silence was broken by sounds that instantly caught my attention.

"A woman was speaking, and a woman answered. And I felt certain that I recognized the second voice.

"The dialogue was brief, but tremendously exciting. The first voice asked, 'Is this Bleak House?' And the answer came, 'Yes; what is wanted?' Then the first voice: 'Is the count there?' The other voice: 'No; I have not seen him for several days.' Then the inquiry—it seemed to me keyed a little higher, and with a sense of stridency: 'Are you alone?' And the answer, still in the rich, low-toned voice that I thought I recognized: 'Yes; quite alone.'

"After that quietly phrased 'I am quite alone,' there was a moment's pause; and then there came a weird, inarticulate sound, between a murmur and a groan, that filled me with horror. I recognized the import of that sound. Two or three times I had heard it, but never before—thank God!—from the lips of a woman. I hope I may never be called on to hear it again from any lips. It is the sound—mechanical, marrow-chilling—made by the dying breath of a human being; not consciously made, but through the forced exhalation when every muscle of the body spasmodically contracts under the impact of a fatal electric shock.

"I have heard that sound on occasions that are like nightmares in memory, when I have attended, in official capacity, an electrocution up at Sing Sing.

"Once you have heard that sound you can never forget it. Now, lying there under the hemlock, in that fantastic situation, I heard it again, and I knew that I had been auditory witness to an electrocution—not this time an official one, but murder unlegalized.

"And to add to the gruesomeness of it all, I felt morally certain that I had recognized the voice of the victim in the last words she would ever utter. I was as certain then as I am now that the woman who had spoken and whose death-moan had come thus strangely to my ears was a woman whom I had met socially on many occasions, and whom I recalled as one of the most winsome and appealing personalities I have ever known.

"I cannot truthfully say that I was surprised to hear the voice of this young woman answering the call from the station on Falcon Hill, for I was already in possession of ample evidence to show that some manner of alliance existed between her and the mysterious Count X or some of his immediate associates.

"But I was none the less horrified at the dénouement of the dialogue I had just overheard.

"You all know how strange are the elemental workings of the mind in its association of ideas. As I lay there in the dark in the shadow of the hemlock, every nerve on the *qui vive* to hear if other sounds should come, my eyes were straining into the darkness as if I might hope to see some evidence of the tragedy a record of which had been brought perhaps from many miles away. Of course I had no conscious expectation of seeing anything. I was thinking only of what I might hear.

"And what I heard was a man's voice, calm, businesslike, unemotional. The answering voice was that of the woman who had been the original interlocutor in the earlier dialogue. The conversation that I now heard was couched, evidently by intention, in somewhat cryptic terms. I could not at the time be quite sure of its import; but the man's words conveyed the impression that everything was quite all right with him except for some trifling misadventure that could readily be corrected if the woman with whom he spoke would touch in succession the second, third and fourth buttons of the sixth series of some apparatus with which it was clear both speakers were familiar.

"As I learned afterward, the buttons in question were adjusted on a wall within easy reach of a sending apparatus of the wireless plant on the hilltop not a hundred yards from the spot where I lay listening to the messages."

THE physician had been sitting on his desk. Suddenly he stood up and lifted his arms out level with his shoulders.

"To be more accurate," he continued, "I should say from the spot where I was standing; for I had risen and crawled out from under the hemlock branches and assumed the upright position in a sort of alcove screened by the group of hemlocks—where I still was quite in the dark, of course—in order that I might turn on my heels, with arms outspread, to gage the direction of the station from which the man was speaking."

He rotated his body, swinging the arms about by way of explanation, as he added:

"Fortunately the conversation continued for several minutes, and I was able, by turning my body at first through a wide angle, then through successively shorter ones, to get the direction with a fair degree of accuracy. The sound of the man's voice was faint, but that made it all the easier to determine its direction, as one could readily tell when it was loudest. Being careful to hold my arms fully outstretched and directly in line and to move the entire body with them, I found the position in which I could hear best, and noted with my radium-face compass the direction in which I was facing.

"This observation enabled us afterward to locate the house on the cliff, over on Long Island, as the only known radio plant lying within ten points or so of the calculated line of direction. Anticipating a little, I may say that within twelve hours from the time when I made my observation, officials of the radio service had invaded the house on the cliff and located the powerful storage-batteries in the cellar, which were connected with the auriculars of the wireless apparatus and with a metal plate on the chair in which the listener would sit in such a way that if a circuit were closed by releasing a little lever operable by wireless, the listener would be struck dead as with a bolt of lightning.

"That was what had happened when the young woman was speaking by wireless telephone while I listened up there on the Connecticut hill sixty miles away; and it was the woman speaking from the wireless stand on the hill that I was presently to invade who made the manipulation that released the fatal lever and sent the murderous current on its way. It was she, also, who had performed another manipulation, of which at the time I was in ignorance, whereby she had released a restraining lever and let an automatic spring shoot a bolt, locking the door of the room where the girl had just been done to death.

"But of course I knew nothing of this as I stood there listening to the businesslike conversation of a man and a woman; so I could only vaguely interpret his seemingly quite unflurried suggestion that she touch certain buttons which, in reality, were to set him free.

"I was able to infer, however, that the woman had some doubt about this procedure. She asked if he was very sure that all would be well if she did as he directed; and he replied, with the only suggestion of impatience that I heard from him: 'Yes, yes; you may depend upon it absolutely. Everything will be quite all right. But we cannot discuss it here.'

"Knowing what I now know about the circumstances—understanding that the count was a prisoner there in the house on the cliff, and that his very life depended on persuading the woman to touch those buttons—I marvel at the calmness he was able to maintain, the even tenor of his voice, the absence of all semblance of impatience, let alone anger.

"But I was witness, a little later, of what the man's anger was like when he no longer felt called upon to repress it. I saw him stride into the room where the woman still sat by the wireless apparatus, there on the hill, his face like the face of a demon. I saw him stride toward the woman, ignoring the pistol that she aimed straight at his breast— However, I am getting rather ahead of my story.

"It seems a little necromantic, doesn't it? Well, a good many necromantic things happened that night. But I shall not go so far as to ask you to believe that a man—even the count—was in two places at the same time. I will freely admit that he got out of the room on Long Island before he strode across the room on the Connecticut hill. And he got out, because the woman on the hill was persuaded—to her own ultimate undoing—and pressed the wonder-working buttons. I did not know this at the time, but I assumed that something definitive had happened, because the man stopped talking. And after that the woman also was silent.

"It was at this time that I decided to send word down to you fellows to come up and see the sights," said the narrator, with a smile, indicating Van Buren and Willoughby with a sweep of his hand.

"The clump of hemlocks from which I had made my wireless observation grows just back of an outcropping rock. Now I stepped out on the point and signaled, waving the light that I held backward and forward and raising it upward slowly, as prearranged."

"But was there not danger that your light might be seen?" I asked.

"None whatever. For it was not, properly speaking, a light at all. It was a radiation developed by electricity in a tube, but a tube so protected that all the rays of ordinary light are shut off, and only rays beyond the range of normal vision are permitted to escape. Both Van Buren and Willoughby were provided with a lens by which they could recognize this invisible light.

"The mechanism used is one that was invented during the war, and intended to enable ships to signal one to another without being seen by the enemy. Unfortunately it was not perfected until about the time the war ended. But it will be available in the future. It served to excellent purpose that night. My signals were seen and answered by both Van Buren and Willoughby.

"I then removed my wireless apparatus, for which I had no further use, and went forward, feeling light as a feather."

THE narrator passed hurriedly over the activities of the ensuing half-hour, partly because most of his auditors were already familiar with the conditions which the observations of that period revealed.

Briefly summarized, these observations included the discovery of a small lake made by damming a little stream in a gorge just beyond the hilltop; a tower beside the lake shielded by tall hemlocks so that it is quite invisible from all points of view, and a log cabin of large area built into the very structure, so to speak, of the woodland, trunks of living trees being utilized as component parts of the structure—one such tree even growing up through the center of the house, its spreading branches affording full protection from observation of the structure, even if one were to view the hilltop from an airplane up in cloudland.

The chief function of the reservoir was to supply water through a long penstock to drive a little turbine wheel adjusted in the thickest part of the woodland and down toward the border of the enclosure three or four hundred feet below. With such a drop, a small supply of water furnishes relatively enormous power; and this was the source of the energy which, converted into electricity by a dynamo of fine construction, made possible the varied activities that the master of this domain had carried out during recent years.

The cave, which was at once laboratory and dwelling, was elaborately supplied with electrical devices; and in the log bungalow, which was the chief dwelling, all manner of household activities, including cooking, were carried out with the utilization of this convenient form of energy.

In winter, all the different laboratory and dwelling-places were heated from the same source.

Not only did the dynamo, perennially active, supply electricity abundantly for all current uses, but a marvelous supply of storage-batteries of many sizes, placed for charging in a cave near the log cabin, made it possible to accumulate supplies of potential energy that, from the standpoint of the needs of the establishment, were practically inexhaustible.

Not all of this, of course, was discovered by Dr. Goodrich during the first few minutes after he left his observation-place in the hemlocks and began ferreting his way into the more intimate recesses of the strange establishment. But he did come upon the little lake almost immediately, and before he was aware of it, he found himself in the immediate vicinity of the guarding tower—a tower, as subsequent daylight observation showed, used in connection with elaborate series of very long aerials as the focus of a wireless plant of tremendous power, capable of sending messages across the ocean, though doubtless used for that purpose on very rare occasions, to avoid danger of detection.

As a receiving station, however, it could be constantly in commission to take messages from almost all over the world. The moon made it light enough for Dr. Goodrich to see that this curious wireless station was built into the clump of trees there at the very crest of the hill as a sort of crow's-nest in such wise that its floor was about thirty feet from the ground, reached only by a ladder propped against one of the tree-trunks. Poles crossed horizontally from one tree-trunk to another formed the bases of the floor, and the entire structure, built apparently out of small tree-trunks, or covered with bark and having the spreading top of a tall ash lifted like an umbrella above it, was secure from detection, and yet afforded a vantage-ground from which an observer armed with a small telescope, such as was subsequently found there, could command a view of the surrounding country in all directions, down valleys and over hilltops, sometimes to horizons at least fifteen or twenty miles distant.

Although Dr. Goodrich had not discovered this wireless crow's-nest until he was very near to it, he had approached so cautiously, keeping so constantly in the shadow and seeking protection always of hemlock and cedar and the laurel underbrush, that he felt confident he himself had not been observed.

"I took mighty good pains to see that I kept out of sight thereafter," said the doctor as he described the incident. "I had no desire at all to be potted from that crow's-nest. I got away from the vicinity of the observation-tower without being seen, and very soon I came upon that other very interesting exhibit, the log cabin.

"That structure—or rather the little level plot of ground in front of it—was the scene of my culminating adventure. But of course I did not know that when I first came to the border of the little clearing, and made my way under protection of a friendly group of laurel to a stand beside a big boulder where I could look through a window into one room of the curious dwelling.

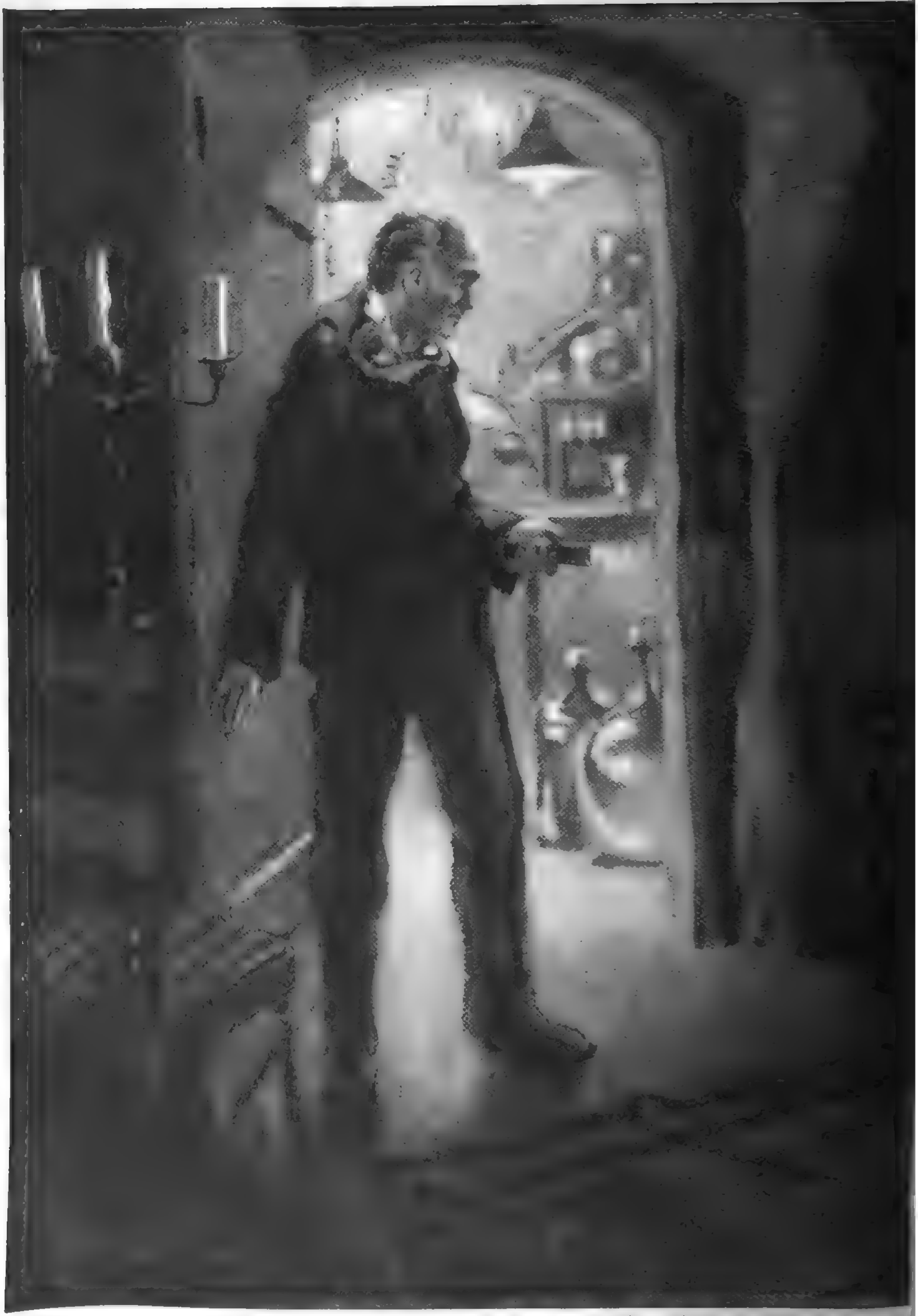
"There I saw the woman—the Brunhilda, shall I say?—whose wireless conversation I had listened to half an hour before.

"I felt pretty sure she was the speaker as soon as I saw her, for she was still sitting at a table with a wireless apparatus; and there was something about her appearance that suggested to me the type of person who would do the thing that I conceived that woman to have done. I was not left long in doubt about it at the time, for almost at once things began to happen.

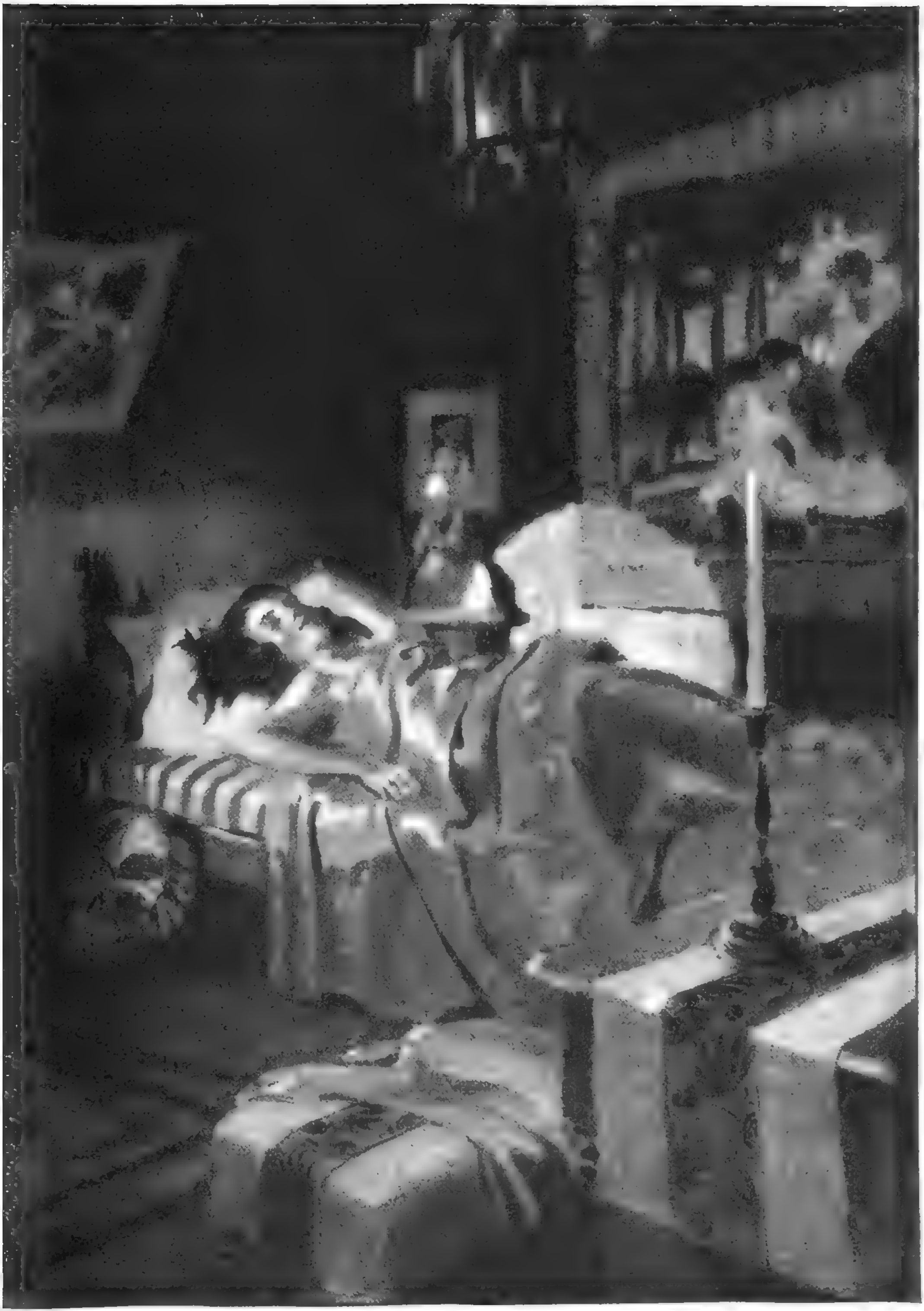
"Began to happen, did I say? That is a very poor phrasing. It suggests a sequence of happenings. In point of fact, the significant things that took place occurred almost simultaneously. The thing had begun and ended while the clock on the wall was striking ten.

"Rather odd that I should remember the clock, isn't it? Doubtless I wouldn't have noticed it except that it chanced to begin to strike while everything was serene within the room. The woman was sitting at the table, turned away from the wireless apparatus, looking toward the door expectantly, just as she had been during the minute or so I had been watching her. In her right hand as it lay extended—her arm resting on the table—she clutched a pistol.

"She made a grim sort of picture, I assure you. She had determination, or, if you prefer, temper, to match her Titian hair. Of that you could not doubt for a moment.



Revealed in the light of his lamp was the form of a woman lying on a luxuri
the sleeper was not roused, the physici



divan over at one side of the room. Pausing an instant only to make sure that
retreated cautiously across the laboratory.

"I felt distinctly glad that I was not the person who was expected to come through that door. For I had no doubt whatever that the woman would use the pistol should occasion call for it—and I can't quite see myself retaliating with a woman for a target. But it chanced that the man who was expected to come through that door had no such scruples—as was made evident just about the time when the clock reached the second stroke of the ten.

"Just at that moment, when I raised my eyes a little to glance at the clock, hearing the first stroke, I heard also the sound of steps; the door across the room flew open and I got my first view of the count I had so long been seeking.

"His distorted features implied a being frantic with rage; and the rage was translated into cyclonic action.

"In three strides he had crossed the room, and he came hurtling against the woman as if he had been thrown from a catapult. I saw the blade of a dueling-sword suddenly dart out from between the woman's shoulder blades; and simultaneously I saw the flash of the woman's pistol and heard its *rat-tat-tat*.

"Then both figures crumpled up and slowly huddled down to the floor.

"And as I looked on this strange spectacle, trying to realize that the amazing duel was over—that both combatants were dead —I became sufficiently conscious to notice that the clock was still striking.

"Speaking of German efficiency—there you have it!" commented Van Buren, with a playful flip of the hand.

"AND now," continued the examiner, "the scene was all set for our famous scrimmage. I didn't know just what was going to happen, of course; but I felt pretty sure that we were likely to see some action. Other people must have heard the pistol-shots and would naturally investigate. If they chose the path on my side of the house, they would surely see me.

"That was precisely what happened. Before I had a chance to seek shelter elsewhere, a man came dashing from the direction of the lake. He appeared to be rushing directly toward the window under which I crouched. In about two seconds he was almost on top of me and, to avoid being trampled on, I got up and confronted him.

"I have seen startled men before, but never such utter amazement as the man showed. He was coming so fast that he almost ran into me in spite of his effort to check himself, but he stopped and sprang backward. I made a mental note that only a trained athlete could do that and keep his balance.

"There was no fear in his face—only amazement. For a full second he did nothing, but only gasped, *'Gott im Himmel!'* But the way he held his hands told me that he would not be the easy game the other fellow had been. I had my pistols in my pockets, but this chap was very evidently unarmed and—call it imbecile, if you will—I just couldn't draw on him. With what seemed almost reflex action, I flipped open my hunting-coat and let it drop to the ground, my pistols in the pocket. As we faced each other, we were evenly equipped.

"By the way he held himself, my friend looked as if he might be a wrestler; so I decided to box him.

"Following thought with action, I leaped right in and shot a left jab to the jaw and followed it with a right upper cut of the same variety I had handed the fellow down by the cave. Both blows landed squarely. That showed me that he didn't know the first thing about boxing. And he didn't counter.

"But this isn't a sporting club. I won't waste time on the scrimmage. It was just like any other where there is no referee to enforce the rules—a combination of prize fight under the old Queensberry rules, catch-as-catch-can wrestling and ju jutsu—it was a rough-and-tumble fight.

"The fellow was as strong as a bull and a glutton for punishment, in the pet phrase of sporting writers, and after a time I grew arm-weary just from hitting him. And as he seemed as fresh as ever, I decided to change my tactics.

"We had worked around to the front of the house in the course of our scrimmage, and I saw, out of the corner of my eye, that we were on a little level place that seemed to come to an end about thirty or forty feet away. It didn't require any expert knowledge of Connecticut hills to understand that this was a little terrace, and that the jumping-off place implied a cliff. I didn't know how deep the precipice might be, but it was reasonable assumption that it was quite deep enough to jar one up a bit if one fell over.

"It occurred to me that it might be a good idea to see that my antagonist did fall over. And I proceeded to jockey him with the intention to put that mental suggestion into operation. I was much lighter on my feet than the other fellow, and it was easy enough for me to carry the fight in any direction. So I backed and side-stepped, and moved away a little, keeping up the running fight until we were over about where I planned we should be. The fellow thought he had me going now, and he made one of his desperate lunges.

"Then I worked a little old-fashioned trick that I had been jockeying for—what the wrestler calls a flying mare. Instead of side-stepping or meeting him with a left jab or an upper cut, as he had a right to expect, I stepped right in, ducking a little under his arm, and catching his right wrist in a double grip. Then I turned instantly and stooped and lurched so that my right shoulder was in his right armpit, his right arm pulled across my chest. Then I just stooped and lunged forward on my hands and knees, and the big battler went into the air, described an arc over my head, and went hurtling over the brink of the cliff and disappeared.

"I was on my hands and knees, right at the brink of the cliff, just within an ace or two of falling over from the force of my own lunge.

"And then the sense of conquest vanished as I reflected that the man I had hurled over the cliff was probably lying dead at the foot of it. I hadn't meant to kill him. I felt a sense of horror and compunction. I can truly say that if I had the thing to do over, I wouldn't attempt to finish the fight that way—though, of course, it seemed a case of his life or mine."

"Compunction fiddlesticks!" cried Willoughby. "It was a grand fight and a famous victory. The only pity of it was that the man wasn't really dead. He landed in the soft embrace of a juniper tree on a little ledge only twenty or thirty feet from the brink of the cliff. And when Van Buren and I came on the scene, just too late to referee the contest, you were still there on your hands and knees, looking over the cliff, and your fallen angel was really picking himself up—though we didn't know it at the moment—and making his way along the ledge and to the other side of the house, planning his getaway."

"Who is telling this story?" asked Van Buren, with a laugh.

"Willoughby is to tell the rest of it," said the examiner. "He was the star performer in the next act, as you know."

AT THAT, however, Willoughby became mum as an oyster. All he could be made to say when urged was:

"Nothing doing. Dr. Goodrich is the sporting editor." And then his tone of facetiousness vanished and he added very gravely: "Honestly, I don't like to think of it. It had to be done, and it was up to me to do it, for I had the only rifle. But I wish it could have been done some other way."

"I understand how you feel," said Van Buren sympathetically. "But just at the time we didn't any of us waste any sentiment on that fellow. He was getting away, and we had to stop him. That's all there was to it, and it was up to you to do the trick."

"And you certainly did it," added the medical examiner. "I saw a good many feats of marksmanship over there in France, but nothing more workmanlike than that. When that sea-plane got under way there, and began scuttling across the lake and took the air, it certainly looked as if one of the chief objects of our entire enterprise was to go for naught. And when your rifle snapped, and the big bird flopped over and came tumbling down into the water again, I assure you I had no thought of compunction or sympathy for the man who had so nearly foiled us. Of course, I didn't know then that he was the man I had been fighting. I thought that my antagonist was lying dead down at the foot of the cliff. But I did know that the man who launched the sea-plane was a criminal who must not escape—especially taking the wonder-working air-plane with him."

"But wait a moment!" I cried. "You people know all about this thing, and so you are rushing ahead and leaving out whole chapters of the story. You talk about shooting down an air-plane, but this is the first intimation I have had that there was an air-plane there to be shot down. Dr. Goodrich never said a word about there being a sea-plane, on this primeval lake of his."

"Nor was there any sea-plane there when I inspected the lake," said the physician. "At the time when I had my scrimmage, and when Willoughby and Van Buren came upon the scene of action, I had no more notion that there was any such mechanism out there on the pond than you had until we just mentioned it now. Our first knowledge of the presence of the air-plane came when we heard a humming sound as its propeller went into action. That was perhaps five minutes after Willoughby and Van Buren came, and while we were over at the window and I was briefly telling them what had happened and showing them the human relics in the wireless-room.

"Just as I was suggesting that it might be well to go about the edge of the cliff and find out what had happened to my wrestling antagonist, the hum of that propeller sounded, and we all of us made a run for the lake. By the time we got there, the machine was well under way, and I called to Willoughby to stop it if he could."

"But still you have not told us how the air-plane came to be on the lake where, according to your own observation, it had not been half an hour or so before," I urged.

"There is really no mystery about that. Count X—or Count von Griffon, as we now know him—had come from Long Island in that air-plane."

"But why did you not hear the air-plane when it came down?"

"Because it probably made almost no noise. The count's engine was equipped with a muffler of such efficiency as to make it practically silent. Moreover, his machine was provided with an extraordinary extra equipment, in the form of a so-called helicopter, consisting of wings set at an angle, like the blades of a propeller, but made of canvas, and of relatively large size. When these were in motion, they would serve to check the flight of the air-plane, if directed a little backward, or to aid in elevating it, or, on the other hand, in letting it settle down gently; yet, as they would not be revolved very rapidly, owing to their large size, they would move quite noiselessly. This was one of the very interesting modifications of the air-plane that the count had introduced. Because of it he could land safely on a very small area, or take off from a similar area, rising at a much sharper angle than can an ordinary air-plane."

"But you say that the count was not manipulating the air-plane when it started to leave the lake and was brought down by Willoughby?"

"No; the count was the man who had run Brunhilda through with the dueling-sword and been shot to death for his pains. It was Brunhilda, of course, who manipulated the wireless signal that resulted in the death of the count's girl companion. It was he who had quietly importuned Brunhilda to release him from the room where he was held captive with the girl's body. There is no question that the count was deeply in love with the girl, just as she was madly obsessed with infatuation for him; and doubtless the count intended from the outset to avenge her death. He lost no time about it, as you know. I did not see his air-plane land in the lake; but I know not more than fifteen minutes had elapsed from the time when I left the lakeside to the moment when he rushed through the door and made his murderous assault on Brunhilda.

"Evidently he came from Long Island at full speed, once he was released; and quite as evidently he lost not a moment in getting at his victim—who proved also to be his executioner—after he landed."

"BUT just what did you mean when you said that this curiously equipped air-plane of the count's had been used in the commission of crimes, or something to that effect?"

"I meant just what the words imply. In the hands of its owner, the count's air-plane was the most curious murder-weapon of which I have any knowledge. The thing is simple enough, yet it seems mysterious, because it represents the application of one of the newest developments of science, and one that would not lie within the range of utilization by the ordinary criminal. Count von Griffon, as you may infer from what you have already heard, was a man of great mechanical ingenuity; and the entire electric plant there on the hill was available for experimentation and the development of new mechanisms, particularly such as might ultimately be of value in warfare.

"The thing with which he had chiefly experimented in recent months was the wireless control of land vehicles and of boats.

He had several automobiles, equipped with storage-batteries, to which a receiving apparatus for wireless signals had been adjusted along with mechanisms for moving the steerage-levers of the car. By sending the right signals from a wireless station, he could control the direction of movement of the car and could start and stop it at will.

"And the sending station from which these signals were directed might be located in his air-plane. He experimented constantly with the direction of automobiles and of boats by this method. He operated almost exclusively at night—and perforce largely on moonlight nights—in order that he might not be observed.

"I have told you, I think, of the phantom car that old Uncle Wallace saw down on Long Island, which the observer declared moved away without any passenger, and ran along the road and turned a corner as securely as if some one were driving it. Of course it was being directed by Count von Griffon from his air-plane, away up in cloudland, where Uncle Wallace did not see or hear him—not that the old fellow would have suspected that the air-plane had anything to do with the car even if he had seen it. Neither, in all probability, would you or I have suspected it."

"In point of fact," broke in Van Buren, "Dr. Goodrich did suspect exactly that on the very first occasion when there was opportunity for him to know anything about it. I mean, of course, the night when the automobile disaster occurred up near New Milford—the time when Gustave Beuscher and his wife and Frederick Mayten were killed, you remember."

"You mean that Count von Griffon and his air-plane had something to do with that disaster?"

"He had everything to do with it," explained the medical examiner. "Of course, Katherine Mayten, who was with Beuscher in the red car, was his confederate. I don't know whether she turned on the current that killed Beuscher, or whether the count released it by wireless from his air-plane. I do know, though, that the woman was fully cognizant of what was to happen. She wore a rubber cloak, rubber gloves, and rubbers on her feet to make sure that she would not by mischance be affected by the current from the storage-battery. Incidentally, it was observation of her tracks—the ones she made after she got out of the car there at the turn—that gave me my second clue. I wondered why the woman who made those tracks had worn rubbers.

"I got the first clue—as Van Buren knows—by noticing that Beuscher's wounds had not bled, showing that he was dead before the actual motor crash occurred. The condition of his blood suggested, and the mark on his hands corroborated the idea, that he had been electrocuted; just as a little later the two secret-service men, Angus and Warpole, were electrocuted—this time undoubtedly by wireless direction—in another of Count von Griffon's cars.

"BUT the most striking feature of the triple murder that Count von Griffon committed that night was that which took place when the car turned about at the second curve in the road and—Katherine Mayten having jumped out and run into the woodland—went back, carefully directed by the count from his aerial coign of vantage, and drove directly into the blue car in which Mayten and Mrs. Beuscher were, and accomplished the death of both of them.

"That, as I have said, was the most remarkable murder that I have ever known. Yet I had a suspicion as to how it was done from the very outset. Van Buren and I, as you know, were in a car only a quarter of a mile or so behind the blue one. And though I did not think anything about it at the time, I did recall next day that I had seen an airplane passing over from the direction of New Milford, a little while before. I remembered this vividly when Uncle Wallace told me about the phantom car he had seen on Long Island—noting that the strange activities of this car had been observed, according to the report, about half an hour or so after the supposed accident near New Milford.

"And then when I heard about the 'vision' that Katherine Mayten was alleged to have had just at ten o'clock, there at Judge Lind's over on Long Island, my suspicions were crystallized. You know about the incident—how Mrs. Mayten professed to have a vision of the death of her husband.

"The thing seemed mysterious, but really was not mysterious at all. It is hardly necessary to say that she was not in two places at the same time. It is equally unnecessary to say that her 'vision' was merely a fake exhibition. She professed to receive an occult message, or see an apparition; but what she was really doing was merely to give an intimation of something of which she had actual first-hand knowledge. Incidentally, it was a very foolish thing to do. I don't quite understand why she did it. Mere bravado, perhaps. Or to emphasize the fact that she was there at Judge Lind's at the very time when the accident occurred—apparently."

"But what is the explanation you say is so simple?"

"If you will think just a moment, you will find the explanation for yourself. You have but to recall that it was Van Buren's watch that recorded the time of the accident at ten o'clock. Now, Van Buren is a New Yorker, and he keeps his watch adjusted, as a matter of course, to daylight-saving time. But Judge Lind, down there on Long Island, uses standard time. Van Buren saw the accident at ten o'clock. Mrs. Mayten staged her 'vision' at ten o'clock. But the two tens were not the same. The accident which Van Buren saw and recorded really took place at nine o'clock by Judge Lind's time; and Katherine Mayten, after participating in the catastrophe, had opportunity to run through the woodlands and to the little plateau beyond, where Von Griffon had landed with his air-plane, and then to be carried in that air-plane over to Long Island and set down where she could readily get to her car in time to reach Judge Lind's house well within the hour.

"And of course, when Judge Lind's clock struck ten, if you could have looked at Van Buren's watch you would have found that it recorded eleven."

"All the same, it was a very pretty alibi," I commented.

"It was indeed. Most ingenious and interesting. And it came within an ace of working. I am inclined to think that if von Griffon had not made the mistake of doing the trick with the yellow car over there on Long Island—when Uncle Wallace first saw it—I might not have guessed his secret."

"But why, do you suppose, did he do that trick? Why was it necessary for him to manipulate the yellow car where Uncle Wallace saw it?"

"I can only make a guess as to that. Perhaps he saw that some one was near the car and did not wish to land where he would be seen; or he may have decided for some reason that it was better to land elsewhere; or it may have been just a caprice—perhaps on Katherine's part—to manipulate the car from the air. At all events, it was done, and the fact that Uncle Wallace chanced to see it aided me materially in piecing together clues and getting on the track of the murderer.

"Katherine Mayten's fake vision was another useful clue. And this illustrates again how the most skilful criminal will always make mistakes. Either he underplays or he overplays his hand—fortunately for us, whose business it is to profit by his mistakes."

"DID you take any prisoners?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. They were a harmless enough bunch, so far as the women were concerned. And the only man was just a chemist, detailed to make experiments with the development of explosives and in particular poisonous gases. He was only a minor cog in the wheel. The real master mind was von Griffon. Brunhilda was a good second. Incidentally, she was the count's legal wife, and her prejudices and jealousies were probably responsible for a fair share of the criminal activities.

"Gustave Beuscher, for example, had offended her, according to what one of the women told us. I do not think that either the count or Katherine Mayten had any particular reason to wish to get rid of Gustave—although he had been a confederate of the count's and knew a great deal too much about the activities on Falcon Hill.

"Similarly, I do not know that any one cared very much about Mrs. Beuscher—Georgina. She also knew too much, perhaps; but the main purpose of the catastrophe there on the hillside road was the elimination of Katherine Mayten's husband. That brought his widow into a fortune, which the count felt that he could use; and her infatuation made her ready to agree to almost anything. She was always a reckless, devil-may-care sort of girl, and her experience over in France didn't make her any less so; but I don't think she ever did anything really desperate till she got in with the count and his gang. Anyway, she paid the full penalty. Of course she had a direct hand in the death of three secret-service men—Angus and Warpole and Jirtle—as her signals, conveyed through an induction-coil hidden beneath the moss on which she stood there on the ledge, were guides for the wireless operator up at the central plant, who directed the yellow car and released the deadly current and sprung the rocklike platform from which Jirtle was precipitated."

"But what, after all," I asked, "was the main purpose of the extraordinary radio plant and general electric equipment that Count von Griffon had developed in that peculiar location?"

"I think there is no difficulty in answering that. The count had close affiliations with persons in authority in his native land. His wireless station, one of the most powerful anywhere, might prove of inestimable service should certain international complications arise. Also his novelties in air-planes and the wireless control of vehicles and water-craft might be of service. And the little lake up there on the hilltop, in addition to being a landmark visible from a great distance—from the air, I mean—might afford a landing-place for air-craft from overseas at a time when publicly known landing-places were not available. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly so."

"Meantime we have to thank Count von Griffon for supplying our government with a very finely equipped wireless plant that might, under certain circumstances, be put to a quite different use from that planned for it."

Dr. Goodrich seemed to find the thought amusing. After a moment's pause he added, dryly, "Which illustrates old Bobbie Burns's idea about the best-laid plans of mice and men."

THE words were spoken with the air of one who says, "Well, all that is finished, and everything cleared up."

But there was a quizzical expression on the physician's face that puzzled me. So I paused—I was actually on my feet, ready to go—and, thinking a moment, ventured another question.

"By the way," I said, "has any effort been made to recover Katherine Mayten's body?"

The physican was silent for a few moments, and his face was now altogether serious. Presently he said, "I don't know that there is any reason why I should not answer that question, for in any event the thing cannot long be kept secret."

He reached over and took from his desk an official-looking document. "In point of fact," he continued, "the full report has only just come to me. At any rate, it completes the story.

"The answer to your question, then, is: Yes; the body of Katherine Mayten has been recovered. This is the report of the captain of the ship who recovered it twelve hundred miles out at sea."

"In the name of wonder, what are you talking about?" I exclaimed.

"About the body. I am telling you where it was recovered. To add to the romantic features of the story, I may add that the captain reports that there was a heavy storm on at the time, and that he had great difficulty in recovering the two bodies, and was quite unable to salvage the air-ship."

"Two bodies? Air-ship?" I gasped.

The physician continued: "Romantic situation, was it not? To make the thing complete, I may add that the captain reports that Katherine and her lover were found clasped in a death embrace. He saw the air-plane fall into the sea, and it is his opinion that its occupants were drowned immediately."

By this time I had sufficiently recovered from my astonishment to appreciate that the physician was speaking quite seriously. So I endeavored to gather my wits together and get at the explanation of the amazing thing he was revealing. I could see that the others were enjoying my astonishment—but I did not begrudge them that.

"In heaven's name," I said, "now that you have had your fun with me, read me your riddle. As I have understood the matter, Katherine Mayten was murdered over there on the cliff on Long Island, and her body was sent out into the Sound in a boat directed by Count von Griffon from his air-plane, and presumably sunk there. And now you tell me——"

"Katherine Mayten was not the young woman who was killed over on Long Island. Her name was Katherine Elsby. Her automobile was found standing on the cliff and her gloves and cap were there in the boat-house. The fact of her apparent accidental drowning through collapse of the boat in which she was taking a moonlight ride was inconspicuously reported in the papers. I may add that her body has not been recovered."

"Where, then, was Katherine Mayten during that memorable evening?"

"It chances that I can answer your question very definitely. Katherine Mayten was the woman that I saw sleeping in the mysterious cave when I was making my tour of exploration that night. Her lover was the man of science whom I encountered at the mouth of the cave and so readily overpowered. Our prisoners gave us full information as to that."

"Great Scott! Did they also tell you how Katherine and her lover made their escape?"

"Only in general terms. However, as to that there was no mystery. The cave and laboratory and the wireless room in the log cabin were connected by various electrical devices, including a dictagraph-like apparatus; and any disturbance of unusual character in one would necessarily be heard in the other. So Katherine was sure to be awakened by the sound of the pistol-shots. She would naturally start to investigate, and would find her lover—our prisoners spoke of him always as 'the professor'—near the cave entrance, where I had left him bound. After she had released him, and learned from him that their domain had been invaded, she would think it time for radical action.

"The cave and the log cabin, by the direct route—which was not the one that I had taken—are only a few hundred yards apart. Doubtless Katherine and her professor came to the log cabin to investigate; and they probably arrived about in time to see Willoughby bring down the air-plane. Then they knew that they had no time to lose.

"Part of this, you understand, is inferential. I did not see Katherine Mayten again after I came away from her cave; nor did I see the professor after I left him bound there at the cave entrance. But we did see the big air-plane in which they made their escape as it rose above the tree-tops."

"From records that we found in the laboratory, this was a plane especially designed for long-distance flight. It was the count's belief, it appeared, that this craft could cross the ocean; and it was always kept fully equipped and ready to make the attempt. Doubtless the count realized that sooner or later an emergency must arise in which it would be necessary for him to escape by air-plane if at all. Katherine Mayten, and the only surviving member of the company of conspirators, realized that the emergency had come that night. So when they brought the big air-plane out of the hangar—which was well camouflaged on a terrace a little way over the hill—they were only attempting to put into execution a plan that had doubtless been frequently discussed."

THE physician paused and for a moment scanned the paper he still held in his hand.

"The captain's report here shows how near they came to carrying out their project," he said. "They were twelve hundred miles on their way when some little thing went wrong—we shall never know what—and their journey ended. If their luck had held another six or eight hours, they would have been in the Azores; and then, in all probability, they could have negotiated the rest of the journey to a place of safety."

"One can't help regretting that they did not accomplish it," I ventured. "Such audacity deserves its reward."

Dr. Goodrich regarded us with a benevolent smile.

"A public official may privately acquiesce in such a sentiment," he said, "but may not openly announce his acquiescence."

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In January EVERYBODY'S—*out December 15th*

Daddy's Gone A-Hunting

Do the Exigencies of a Career Entitle an Artist to Shirk Serious Responsibilities He Has Wittingly Assumed? Miss Akins Develops Situations in this Successful Play that Reach the Core of the Question

By Zoë Akins

Author of "Déclassée," etc.

Published by courtesy of the author and the producer, Arthur Hopkins

JULIAN FIELDS has been a year in Paris, studying painting, and to-day he is coming home. *Edith*, his wife, and *Janet*, their eight-year-old daughter, have been making ready for him, and their little Harlem flat is gay with fresh curtains and pink candles. It is a triple occasion, for it is also the birthday of both *Edith* and *Julian*.

Mrs. Price, a neighbor, is bustling about, preparing the feast, and *Walter Greenough* has called with flowers, candy and champagne. His cousin, *Theodore Stewart*, is with him.

STEWART: You seem very much at home around here.

GREENOUGH: Does it really seem like that to you? And there's not a place in the world where I mind my p's and q's so carefully. Or where I feel more in the way.

GREENOUGH *has been introduced into the* FIELDS' *flat by* PRICE, *who is one of his employees.*

STEWART: Funny how you can know a man all your life, your own cousin, for instance, and find out new things about him every day. I might never have known of this interesting phase of yours now if I hadn't run into you coming out of Maillard's and begged to be taken along wherever you were going.

GREENOUGH: Damn it, Ned—get rid of your foul suspicions that I'm here in the rôle of a villain. Or keep them—if you like—only get it out of your head that you're to be best man at a scandal.

STEWART: You're damned sentimental about Mrs. Julian Fields, Walter, and I'm very glad for your sake that the wandering husband arrives to-day.

EDITH *comes in with some autumn leaves which she has been at some pains to get because* JULIAN *loves them so. She is touched by* GREENOUGH'S *thoughtfulness.*

STEWART *expresses a wish to help* JULIAN, *and* EDITH *shows them a pamphlet which* JULIAN *illustrated and goes to get other examples of his work. They speculate about the mysterious benefactor who sent* JULIAN *to Paris.*

STEWART (*suddenly*): Look here—I think I know who that fairy godmother was—I think Hester Dahlgren told me something of discovering a young man quite satisfactorily poor and ignorant and talented.

GREENOUGH: Hester Dahlgren! But does she know what's what?

STEWART: Not a thing! She's one of those women with fool enthusiasms who like to meddle with other people's lives. If she's the one—well, at the worst she's probably let a good draftsman waste some time.

They leave shortly, and EDITH, *restless and eager, invents things to do, until* JANET *rushes in, crying, joyfully,*

"Oh, mother, mother, he's come!" *They race from room and down the hall.*

A few minutes later, JANET *comes back,* *almost creeping, into the room. She stands huddled, frightened, to one side, waiting. Then* EDITH *returns—silent, slow of movement, lost and uncertain. It is plain that the home-coming has been a disappointment.* JULIAN *comes in presently, burdened with luggage. He is a blithe young man, extravagantly dressed with a certain suggestion of the Latin Quarter in both manner and clothes.*

Seemingly unconscious of EDITH'S *hurt bewilderment,* JULIAN *stares round the room curiously, as though he had never seen it before.*

"And I lived here seven years!" he comments, half bitterly, half humorously.

JULIAN *and* EDITH *are uneasy and embarrassed.* JANET, *sensing disturbed atmosphere, had begged to go out to play. They sit down at the table and serve each other, but neither touches the food.*

JULIAN: I suppose there's not such a thing as a drop of wine in the place.

EDITH, *with a quick* "I forgot," *goes to the kitchen and gets a bottle of champagne.*

JULIAN: Good heavens — champagne! Where did you ever get it?

EDITH: Some one sent it for you. A man named Greenough. Ada Price's husband works in one of his engine-plants. He's always doing nice things for people.

JULIAN (*more to himself than to her*): Well—we'll take what the gods send and ask no questions.

EDITH *can no longer stave off the storm. She shakes her head miserably, and her head drops in her hand. With a sob in her voice, she says,* "Oh, Julian!"

JULIAN: Come, come. Let's not be tragic. There's nothing to be tragic about. For God's sake, don't cry! Be reasonable. (*Almost violently.*) I've come back. Yes—I've changed. I'll try to do my best. But I'm different, of course. You didn't expect me to come back unchanged, did you?

EDITH: So you do not love me any longer——

JULIAN: Love! What in the name of God has love got to do with it? It's life—just life. Life has a way of picking people up and tearing them apart—and taking them on—different ways—and no man knows what's to happen to any of us next.

EDITH: But, Julian—you and I—all our lives—we've been so— We weren't like other husbands and wives who just happened to meet and like each other and got married. We were each other's always.

JULIAN: Yes—we were each other's. Too much each other's.

EDITH: And now—I'm still yours—but you aren't mine——

JULIAN: You can't talk about these things. They happen. Nobody wants them to happen. They just happen.

EDITH: I don't know what you've done—or what's happened to you. I only know you've come back a stranger—and that I can't bear it.

JULIAN (*slowly*): I've changed. I said I had changed. But what can we do about it? You sent me away. You wanted me to get on. A man can't go and find out what the world is and remain tied to his wife's apron-strings. Good God! These readjustments! How long have I been away? A year or a lifetime?

EDITH: You're being terribly cruel, Julian.

JULIAN: I'm trying to be honest. I can't bring back what I used to feel for you, Edith. What do you want me to do? Pretend? I'm sorry, but——

EDITH (*quietly, gravely*): Do you love some other woman?

JULIAN: No! My God—no! I never have and I never will. Love! Love! I've had enough of love. Love's not everything—as you women think. Love is damned little—when a man's got work to do.

EDITH (*relaxing a little*): Then you've been faithful, at least. That's a great load off my heart.

JULIAN: No—not even that. (EDITH *rises blindly. He catches at her hand.*) Sit down. I wonder if I can make you understand. These—these affairs with other women haven't meant anything to me. You've had the best of me. You've had all my youth. Be content with that. You had the years when I should have been free. And we wronged each other—you and I, because you should have had your freedom, too.

EDITH: Freedom? Weren't we free? How could we have wronged each other—when we loved only each other?

JULIAN: It was wrong for me to know nothing—nothing of life—except what I learned in a little office filled with drab working men at their desks—and what I found here—here in a little four-room flat in Harlem. Here—where our everlasting conversation was about an increase in salary—or the price of eggs—or what to name the baby. You've stood between me and the freedom my soul needed if it was to find the things that the soul of every man ought to hunt for. Do you understand?

EDITH: Only that you want to be free. Do you want to go?

JULIAN: Not unless I must. There's a world outside this window that you don't know anything about. We can't live like babes in a wood again.

EDITH: Be patient with me, Julian. All I can understand is that you don't love me and that you don't want to love me. And that there isn't anything at all left in your heart—for me. (*A sob checks her.*)

JULIAN: Please don't! It hurts—please—I can't stand this!

He finds his hat and coat and goes to the door. As he opens it, she rises and cries out desperately, Where—where are you going?

JULIAN: I don't know. I don't care. I'll be back later, I suppose.

EDITH *sits for a long time huddled in a large chair, trying to think rationally. Presently* JANET *enters. She goes to her mother and sits on her lap.*

EDITH: Are you tired, dear?

JANET: A little. (*She clings to* EDITH.)

EDITH: What's the matter with mother's big girl?

JANET: Nothing. Let's play I'm a little baby.

EDITH: All right. You're a little baby now.

JANET: Sing—"Bye-o"—to your little baby.

EDITH (*singing*): "Bye-o, Baby Buntin'; daddy's gone a-huntin' " (*her voice breaks*).

JANET: Go on, go on. Hunting what?

EDITH (*with a sob*): God knows!

THE year that follows sees the exodus of JULIAN *and his family from the Harlem flat to a studio-apartment in Washington Square.* EDITH *has adjusted herself to the new conditions of her life and has evolved a certain harmony out of the problems that confronted her on* JULIAN'S *return.*

But a new problem has arisen. The morning papers announce that Hester Dahlgren's husband is suing for divorce—naming JULIAN.

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921

EDITH *is alone, late one afternoon, when* THEODORE STEWART *comes in with* MRS. DAHLGREN.

STEWART: I've brought Mrs. Dahlgren, Mrs. Fields—at her request—very much at her request. I'll go down and wait in the car. There are times when we all skate on thin ice, Mrs. Fields. Mrs. Dahlgren is an expert. I'm not. But I hope that you won't be sorry we came. I think that she wants to suggest something that is for your ultimate happiness as well as her own. (*He goes.*)

MRS. DAHLGREN *looks about and makes herself comfortable on the couch.*

EDITH: Hadn't you better tell me what you came for?

MRS. DAHLGREN *is used to approaching her objectives by more devious routes, and* EDITH'S *directness is discomfiting for a minute. Then she plunges into the business of her visit. She does not want to be divorced. Her husband has got wabbly since the announcement in the papers, and unless* EDITH *sues* JULIAN, *he will probably drop it.*

MRS. DAHLGREN: If you sue for a divorce, that will make my husband sure he was right. I don't think that would be quite fair of you, because Julian told me you weren't jealous—that you knew he was interested in some one else—and that it didn't make any difference.

EDITH (*quietly*): You were very credulous—even I would never have believed that—and I'm not nearly so experienced as you.

MRS. DAHLGREN: But why not? I didn't know you. And I did know that Walter Greenough was here all the time. Naturally, I supposed——

EDITH: (*interrupting*): Let me get that straight. (*She thinks an instant, and then continues.*) I see—naturally— No, Mrs. Dahlgren—whatever else happens, I am not going to get a divorce.

MRS. DAHLGREN *goes, and shortly after* GREENOUGH *enters.*

GREENOUGH: I don't know what I'm doing here. This is one day when I might have had the decency to stay away. You can't want anybody about to-day.

EDITH: It doesn't seem to matter much whether anybody's about or not.

GREENOUGH: I can see that it hurts—that it hurts damned hard. It does—doesn't it?

PHOTOGRAPH BY ABBE

Marjorie Rambeau, the star of "Daddy's Gone A-Hunting," enacts the wife of a painter who decides that marriage is interfering with his career, and acts accordingly. His conduct is such that she is finally thrown into the arms of another. But her first love cannot be quenched. A tragic situation that affects both man and wife equally brings this very interesting play to a dramatic climax.

Edith (*nodding, barely able to speak*): Oh, yes.

Greenough: And here I am—so damned much in love with you that I could kill anybody—even another man—for making you suffer a single instant. In God's name, Edith, haven't you had enough? Aren't you tired of this? Is there anything more that a man can do to a woman to humiliate her and distress her? When I saw the papers this morning, I said, "This ends it." And it does end it, doesn't it? I'm not one who believes in divorce usually. And I'm not thinking of myself, either—or of what your being free might mean to me, some day. I tell you I'm thinking only of you. And I tell you, Edith, that I don't believe the woman lives who could be married to Julian Fields and be happy. There's nothing in it for you, my dear—nothing but a miserable, half-squalid, bohemian existence. Life owes you something more—and you owe it to yourself to take it.

Edith (*vehemently*): And don't you suppose I've said all this to myself a hundred times?

Greenough: Then if you see it, too——

Edith (*with a sob*): I do see it! (*There is a sharp pause. Then she breaks out passionately.*) But there's more than just that! I see that Julian is right. In his mind he's right. That's what is so important. It may be all wrong in another way. And it's been hard to bear—and *is* hard to bear—all these new ways of his. But I know there's something very fine back of all his cruelty and his idleness and his selfishness. There's something he's been trying to make me understand—a little bit. It's that he's going through something, and he's got to go through it to get where he's going. It's something of the spirit. It's something that would be like religion, if religion meant doing everything you want to do—and laughing about it—and learning from it—instead of not doing it. Do you see?

Greenough: I see—but not with your idealism— I see only a young man with no great talent—idling away—but— There's no use talking. You love him. You'd forgive him for anything.

Edith: I can see how you think that. But I don't think it's true. You say Julian is idling away his time. That's true. But I've worked all my life, and I don't know that keeping oneself busy is such a wonderful thing. I often wonder what he must be thinking of when he lies on the sofa, there, smoking. I've a great respect for any one who can lie still and think. As for the rest of his faults—I don't deny them. But at least there's something very free about everything he says and does—and I'm sure it's a very fine thing for a man to be free, that way, whether it makes a woman unhappy or not.

Greenough: And what do you think your husband would say or do if you chose to be as free as he does?

Edith: He's explained that many times. He thinks we ought to both be free. He doesn't think our being married to each other ought to make the least difference—to either of us. Julian's fair.

Greenough: Is he? Are you brave enough to prove to yourself whether he's fair or not? Are you?

Edith: Why should I prove what I know?

Greenough *draws from his pocket a small velvet case containing a number of wonderful jeweled bracelets which belonged to his mother. He challenges her to wear them and test the effect on* Julian. *She hesitates a moment; then, with a tinge of excitement, decides that it will be good for* Julian *to be hurt a little.*

Greenough: Keep them, then, and see. But I think you'll find— (*He pauses sharply—then speaks wearily.*) I'll go now. Probably I've said exactly the wrong thing, and I thought I had my arguments all arranged in invincible formation. At any rate, it's something to see you now and then. Life would be a very simple thing, to-day—wouldn't it?—if you cared for me as I care for you. (*He goes.*)

A while later, when Edith *comes from her bedroom with hat and cape on to go marketing for dinner, she finds* Julian *alone in the sitting-room. They make conversation about obvious things for a minute. Then,*

Edith: Julian, you've talked a lot about freedom—and experiences—and doing as one wants to do.

Julian: Yes—I suppose I've talked more than was really necessary about a thing that most men take for granted.

Edith: Perhaps. But you *did* mean that I had the same right to have the same sort of incidents in my life? You said we were both to be free!

JULIAN (*laughing*): Poor Edith! Don't tell me you've been having your little temptations.

EDITH: Would that be very amusing?

JULIAN (*still taking her very lightly*): Now this begins to sound serious. I'm afraid you've been letting Greenough really make love to you.

EDITH: I'm afraid I have. (*She holds out her hands so that the bracelets catch the full light beneath his eyes.*) Does it matter?

JULIAN: Good heavens! Those things are worth a fortune. Did Greenough really give them to you? (*She nods "Yes."*) I can't believe it—of you. (*A bit unsteadily.*) By George, women always fool men! Even you!

EDITH (*groping for what he is feeling*): I was free to take them, wasn't I, Julian? You're going to be perfectly fair about it, aren't you? (*He doesn't answer.*) You will be fair—even though it hurts—won't you, Julian?

JULIAN: *Fair?* Why not? Sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose. I've always said that.

They sit in silence for a moment.

EDITH: Shall I take them off—now?

JULIAN: Take them off? Why? You spoke of being fair. Well, I hope I've proved to you that I meant what I said about freedom. I've not asked for anything I'm not willing to let you have. I—I congratulate you. As a woman, you're a great success. I hope you get another dozen or two like them. They make your hands look very charming.

Blazing with anger and pain at his indifference, EDITH *goes out, crying:*

"You should have beaten me, but you didn't care! And that's what I can't bear."

JULIAN *is dazed. Presently* JANET *comes into the room, her books under her arm. She places them neatly on the shelf and then comes to her father and touches his hand.*

Seeming not to notice, he goes to the window. JANET *follows him, slipping her hand into his. There is silence for an instant.*

JANET (*excitedly, and ending with a sob*): There's mother running! She's crossing on the other side of the square. See! Where's she going, father? Where's she going?

JULIAN: God knows!

IT IS five years since EDITH *left* JULIAN, *and she is living with* GREENOUGH *in an apartment overlooking Central Park.*

JANET *has been desperately ill in a hospital and is expected home to-day. Her illness has raised complications.* JULIAN *has been at her bedside constantly, and she will expect to see him when she comes home. But* GREENOUGH *has refused to permit him to come to the apartment.*

EDITH: We won't quarrel—will we? You've been so wonderful, Walter, through it all. But you're making me feel very awkward. Of course I didn't want to see him. I think you know that after that night when you came up to me and put your hand on my shoulder and said: "Stop—stop! Where do you think you're going—running like this—" (*She pauses for an instant.*) Thank God you'd walked away from our house that night just ahead of me! I think you know that—that—from that time on there began for me a new life. I don't say that from that moment the new life was a happy life. One gets used to great changes slowly. But I have been happy, Walter. You made life all over for me. You've been so generous. Please be generous now.

GREENOUGH: Kiss me. (*For an instant his lips are on hers. Then he speaks roughly.*) Have it your way. Have him here when you want him here—after she comes—as long as she's not able to go to the country. But I'll not be around. I'm going to the camp. I'll stay until you're settled in the country. Only—once you said something about the terrible clairvoyance of love. Well, I've got that—that clairvoyance. I'll know if anything happens to change you.

EDITH: Nothing can happen. Everything happened that could happen a long time ago. Don't you realize, Walter, that there's only a stone-cold feeling in my heart for Julian? Please believe me.

GREENOUGH: There's one thing I'd believe against all the evidence in the world—and that's your word. I can't say to you, "Feel this and that," or, "Don't feel this and that." You'll feel what you're going to feel. But I can say to you, "Give me your word that you'll never go back to him." Will you do that?

EDITH: Go back to him! (*Her amazement is almost touched with humor.*) I give you my word, my dear: I'll never go back to him.

GREENOUGH (*speaking with sudden gentleness*): I'm so sorry, dearest, about all this. We'd better fix things so we can be married. It will be better for Janet, you know—she's growing up. It will be better in every way for all of us. Don't you think so, too? (*She nods. He goes on suddenly, almost buoyantly.*) That's sensible, at any rate. No more of this apologetic, uncomfortable semiclandestine stuff. We'll be Mr. and Mrs. and those that like it can come and see how happy we are—and those that don't can go to the devil with our compliments.

EDITH (*irrelevantly*): Janet's such a good little thing—isn't she? (*Her voice breaks suddenly, as she adds*) She looked too lovely to-day. She's going to be pretty, Walter.

GREENOUGH: She's damned plucky. I'll say that.

THEODORE STEWART *comes in and tells* EDITH *that* JULIAN *is in the library and he suggests that she ought to see him for a moment. She hesitates.*

GREENOUGH: This is about enough. Tell him to come in—if he's still there. We'll both see him—and that will end it.

So STEWART *brings* JULIAN *in.*

JULIAN: What I came for (*he speaks to* GREENOUGH *with sudden energy*) was to thank you, first, for all that your money has done for my daughter. She's had the best—when she needed it most. You—you were able to buy Death off. Money's a fine thing to have at a time like that. I'm sorry my own pockets were empty—as usual——

EDITH: But, Julian—how do you get along? You must——

JULIAN: Don't worry. One odd job keeps me going to another. Besides, my old firm—they still remember that I sat at a desk there, in a very regular fashion, for ten years—that was your doing, Edith—and they're not afraid to trust me with all the work I'm willing to undertake. They even offered to take me back the other day, Edith, and start me in where I left off five years ago. That's fine progress, isn't it?

EDITH: You ought to go. It may not be anything—very—very brilliant just now—but it would be better than just drifting—aimlessly—doing nothing at all.

JULIAN: I'm not so sure. You'd think that, of course. But there are worse things than being perfectly free. You never know what's just round the corner. Probably it's somebody you owe money to—but it might be a bird of paradise flashing like a rainbow down an alley. To tie myself up to a desk now would be the end of everything for me.

EDITH: So you're still hunting?

GREENOUGH: You can't expect me to take a very sympathetic point of view—but I hope you'll pardon me for saying that, as far as I can make out, you're simply explaining to yourself and to us your inactivity. But are you sure you're not—just lazy?

JULIAN: I am lazy—but that—that's not the main difficulty. You wouldn't call a man standing still in a fog lazy, would you? However, there's no use your bothering about me. I'm going away.

GREENOUGH: Wait a minute! There's one thing more. The sort of life that Edith and I have been living isn't exactly to my taste. She wouldn't bother about a divorce in the beginning——

JULIAN: And you'd like one now, so you can be married? I see. That ought to be easily arranged. I'll do anything.

GREENOUGH: Then, before you go—since you're leaving town—if you will talk over the details with my cousin——

JULIAN: Certainly. (*Then to* EDITH.) This is good-by, Edith. There's no use getting sentimental, but you know that if you and Janet needed me now, I'd be willing to be a galley-slave—at that desk I hate so much—the rest of my life. It was good of you to send for me—and let me see her—so often. You're looking wonderful—and I know you're both better off than you ever were with me.

He goes out with STEWART.

EDITH: Well, that's done. You understand—don't you?—how impossible it is to keep from feeling sorry for Julian. And to keep from worrying a little about him. He's so wrong-headed. He simply won't do what he should. He's very charming with Janet. Yesterday she was playing that she was his mother, and that he was a bad boy who wouldn't go to school——

EDITH'S *maid enters, her face averted. She stops as if she had something difficult to say, then tells them, haltingly, that word has just been telephoned from the hospital that* JANET *is dead.*

EDITH *stares at nothing for a long time, shivering as though she were very cold.*

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921

EDITH: It must have happened very suddenly. Oh, do you believe it, Walter? I can't get it through my head—that—it's so. (*Suddenly*) Somebody must tell Julian! He's here, isn't he? Oh—poor Julian!

GREENOUGH *leaves her for a minute to tell* JULIAN, *and* EDITH *moves toward the fire, shivering and warming her hands.*

GREENOUGH (*coming back*): He's been told.

EDITH: Poor Julian! He's a child, too. Walter, I gave you my word a minute ago——

GREENOUGH: Not to go back to him. I know.

EDITH: I can't promise that now. You must give me my word back. He may need me. Yes; I must be free to do as I think best now.

GREENOUGH: And this proves, of course, that you love him—and that you've loved him all along.

EDITH: Does it? It doesn't seem to me that it's love I feel. It seems to me that I feel nothing at all—except a sudden big loneliness—his and mine.

GREENOUGH: There's nothing I can say, of course. This isn't the time to say anything—about oneself. But I give you your word back, Edith. In God's name do anything that you think will ease your pain!

He starts to leave the room. STEWART *enters.*

STEWART: There are all sorts of things to be done——

GREENOUGH (*brokenly*): You attend to them, Ned. I'm all in. I—I—I've had a mortal blow. I've got to get out. It's—it's the other man she wants with her now. Do what you can for her, Ned—only, I—I'm through, by God!

He goes quickly. STEWART *brings* JULIAN *in and leaves them together.*

JULIAN: Oh, Edith! What are we going to do, Edith? Death's so damnably final! She's gone—and I can't bear it!

EDITH: I knew you'd feel like that. But you must bear it, Julian. We'll have to bear it together. You're my little boy again. And you need me again. And we have each other—just as we used to.

JULIAN (*lifting his head*): No, no! That's not true. We haven't each other. The past is all gone—blown away like ashes in the wind. We can't ever get it back. And Janet is ashes in the wind, too, now.

EDITH: But—you and I are still here, Julian. And everything's forgiven between us and set straight, and just being together will take some of the ache and the loneliness away and give us a little ease—after a while.

JULIAN *is silent for a moment; then he comes and puts his arm about her shoulder.*

JULIAN: You're being very wonderful. You're all broken up now, and so am I. But—Edith dear, I don't want you to think of doing—what you're thinking of doing. Things are better—the way they are. Heaven knows I'll think of you and Janet day after day—and night after night— But we can't bring back the other days. (*He goes on gently, absorbed in his own thoughts.*) He'll make you a good husband. I never did. To be honest, Edith, we'd find it impossible—without Janet. (*He goes out.*)

STEWART *comes in presently.*

STEWART: I heard Julian go, didn't I?

EDITH: I suppose so—he just left.

STEWART: Will he—be back?

EDITH: I don't think so—not here—not to see me.

STEWART: But I understood from Walter that you and he— (*She laughs, and he says anxiously*) Edith dear?

EDITH: Walter was wrong. Julian didn't want me. He's gone now. And Walter's gone, too. And Janet's gone. The world is a very unsafe place. It's all shifting sands, Ned. Shifting sands and changing winds. It's just as well that Janet won't have to grow up. If she had been a boy, it would have been different. But she'd have been a woman in a little while. And she'd have begun to think about love before long— I've always tried to be nice, Ned. I've never wanted to hurt anybody. I've been fairly considerate and fairly kind and always fairly honest, I think. I tried to be a good wife—and I'm sure I was a good mother. Janet would have been something like me. But rather than have the things that have happened to me ever happen to her I'd have had the Kidnaper come and take her.

STEWART: But, Edith—this is a strange way to talk. I can't understand about Julian. What are you going to do now?

EDITH: I wonder? God knows.

The play of next month will be W. Somerset Maugham's latest comedy, "The Circle," which is one of the successes of the present New York season—in January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15th.

The Buddha Pearl

Jewels, Particularly Missing Ones, Are as Fascinating to the Grown-up as the Circus Is to Youth—Which Means You Will Miss Something Good if You Don't Read this Jewel-Mystery Story

By William C. McCloy

Illustrations by Harvey Emrich

"WELL, that does beat all!" exclaimed Captain Maynard. "You say every piece—every single piece—in the crate is damaged?"

"Every piece—some more and some less," replied Arthur Macgruder.

There was a wide difference between the two men on the deck of the tramp steamer lying at anchor off Tompkinsville. Maynard was a grizzled-haired, middle-aged sailor, and had brought the steamer from the other side of the world, arriving but a week before. Macgruder was a pink-and-white stripling of twenty-two—clerk for Marsden & Fox, importers of Oriental goods—and had never been more than fifty miles from the Battery. Maynard's gray eyes looked reflectively over the waters of the upper bay toward the sky-scrapers of the city. After a moment of meditation, the captain drew a ring from his pocket and went on:

"I was a-passin' along a street in Yokohama when an Americanized Jap bumped into me—rough-like. I grabbed him by the neck and tossed him aside like a bag of potatoes. He looked at me—awful wicked. I seen a knife in his hand. Somethin' had to be done—and done quick. I clipped him behind the ear, knockin' him four yards endways. I braced myself for a jit move; but he picked himself up with a funny smile on his face—and in a friendly way handed me this."

The captain passed the ring to Macgruder, who examined it carefully. Traced on the gold setting were several small Japanese characters. Through the thin, translucent sides of the pearl there could be seen plainly a squat little image of Buddha.

"Wasn't that fine of him to forgive such a blow—in such a way?" said Macgruder enthusiastically, looking at the strong, robust figure of the captain, and contrasting it with his own and the small figures of the Japanese in general. "I couldn't forgive you if you handled me that way. Weren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"I was for a while; but now I think it was his devil way of gettin' even with me by passin' me a jinx," said Maynard. "Before I left Yokohama, I showed it to a Jap jeweler I know there. I told him how I got the ring, and he told me all about these fake pearls. The Buddha priests make this kind by puttin' the little images in an oyster, and the oyster covers the images with a film. The priests used to fool the coolies by tellin' 'em it was a miracle of Buddha, but the coolies are that wise now they don't bite any more. So the Japs insert little beads and pass the fake pearls off on white men for real pearls. This jeweler said he made this pearl into a ring for a Buddha priest. The jeweler knew it by them marks on it. They mean, 'The god never forgets.' He said the priest told him he was goin' to give it to a geisha girl—Happy Butterfly—or some other kind of a bird. When it was all done and the jeweler handed it to the priest, the priest told him that he was afraid the girl might give it to an Americanized Jap with foreign-devil ways. So he put a curse on it and told her that it would bring nothin' but bad luck if she gave it away. The jeweler asked me all about the Jap who gave it to me, and decided that the girl gave it to the rival right away. He said that the geishas saw so many foreign devils nowadays that they were like the image-makers—they didn't believe in the god no more. If that was the fellow she gave it to, that rap of mine behind his ear must have made him think that the thing was cursed for sure—and he gave it to me so that the curse would follow me. My Jap friend was afraid of it. But I wasn't afraid of any such spell. I kept it—though when I was two weeks out I began to wonder whether it was a hoodoo. I had storms nearly all the way. I was held up two weeks at the canal. Three weeks out I fell down the hatch and broke my leg. Now you tell me the whole crate is broke up. Such gimcracks are only fit for women—anyhow. Here; do you want the thing? Give it to some girl."

"What a punk superstition!" said Macgruder, laughing. "Thank you."

"That's what I said," replied Maynard. "But no more jinx for me — I've had enough."

As Macgruder left the ship, he thought over the captain's story with amusement. It was in keeping with the captain's character—strong and violent—and, having gained the ring through his violence, he was apt to think that the violent weather and misfortunes that followed him were due to the curse of the ring. But Macgruder was too youthful to dwell long on this thought. There were other things of higher importance to him. One of these was to gain the favor of Madge Wilson, the blue-eyed stenographer in Marsden & Fox's office, and another was to get a raise in salary. He thought that the ring would help a lot as to the first. He would give it to her. Not right away—that wouldn't be good business. He would show it to her—make her want it badly, and when she realized the value of it—well, she could have it then.

But alas for the best laid plans of men! It didn't work out that way. It never does where women are concerned. Macgruder's efforts to awaken a longing for the Buddha pearl in the mind of the slim, brown-haired stenographer evoked feminine rejoinders—so pointed that Macgruder was led to refer banteringly to the string of beads the girl wore as "Coney Island pearls"—and she had given eight seventy-five for them at a real jeweler's on Eighth Avenue! The indignant girl retorted angrily:

"You big boob! Go away! I'm busy—and don't ever speak to me again—you and your cheap old ring!"

MACGRUDER, in discomfiture, moved away —then remembered he had not yet made his report to Mr. Marsden. The old gentleman, fuming over the loss of his afternoon round of golf, sharply reprimanded Macgruder for his delay, and—well, who could endure a sharp reprimand when the best girl in the world had just told him never to speak to her again about the ring he intended to give her? Certainly not Arthur Macgruder. He answered back tartly, and Mr. Marsden discharged him peremptorily for insolence.

Young Macgruder was too sophisticated to harbor any foolish superstitions as to lucky or unlucky rings. He never once thought of the Buddha pearl as the cause of his dismissal. But after hunting for a job two weeks without result, he did think of it as a means of raising money—which he sorely needed.

"I've got to sell it," he thought. "But where? A pawn-shop? No; they wouldn't give me anything worth while. I ought to get one hundred dollars—if I pick the right buyer."

Having nothing else to do, Arthur [illegible] down and ran over the list of men he knew who had one hundred dollars—and would be likely to spend it for a ring. It was a short list. At the top of it stood Bert Armistead, the cashier for Marsden & Fox, whom Macgruder had not seen for two [illegible] days. Hopefully he recalled the tall, athletic, carefully dressed man of thirty, whose black hair and eyes were set off by the [illegible] of a popular leading man.

"He ought to be interested," said Arthur, aloud. "He's as vain as a leading juvenile in the movies."

And Armistead was interested—and amused. He smiled at Macgruder's story of the captain's experiences; but the beauty of the pearl, with the tiny squat image inside, as well as the novelty, appealed to

Burke, the plain-clothes man, examined the imprint on the shirt. "That's a very valuable clue—is it not?" asked Jeffreys. Burke shook his head. "This murderer knew what he was about," he said. "He wore a glove."

him strongly. He reached for his pocketbook and handed Macgruder one hundred dollars—at the very moment Mr. Marsden passed.

One hundred dollars in cash brought hope once more to the breast of Macgruder. He looked over at Madge. She was pounding her typewriter industriously. He decided to walk past her on his way out. Though she wouldn't speak—he knew her—he could look at her; that was something.

But Madge did speak. She looked up with a smile in her blue eyes, and asked, "Where are you now?"

A distressing question to those who are not anywhere—now.

"Nowhere," replied Macgruder; "but I was afraid you wouldn't speak to me."

"Oh, I'm over my mad," she said. "Come over to the house to-night. You haven't been there in two weeks."

Before Macgruder could reply, an office-boy lounged up and said, "Artie, Mr. Marsden wants to see you right away."

Macgruder hurried—this time—to Marsden's office.

"Well, young man," said the elderly man severely, "having difficulty in getting a job?"

"Yes, sir; I am," said Arthur.

The old gentleman smiled and went on, "Come back to your old desk in the morning and try to be more respectful to your elders hereafter."

"Thank you, sir," said Macgruder quickly.

When Macgruder had passed out, the younger partner, Fox, looked up and said: "You surprise me. I never knew you to relent so soon."

"Well, there is a reason for the suddenness," said Marsden slowly. "I saw Armistead pass a large roll of bills to this boy. Our cashier has too much ready money, considering his salary. Keep the boy here and watch him. Send Armistead on a vacation—to Bermuda. Look over his books; if anything is wrong, we will be able to put our hands on him."

Armistead stepped into the office suddenly and made a brief report to Fox. Marsden watched the cashier keenly.

"By the way, Mr. Armistead," said Fox, "both Mr. Marsden and I think you have earned a vacation. Take a run down to Bermuda—the boat leaves on Tuesday."

"Thank you; I shall be most happy to go," said Armistead.

"He didn't seem a bit surprised," said Marsden, in a low voice, when Armistead passed out. "I wonder how long he was at the door before he entered—could he have heard?"

"Oh, I think not," said Fox. "I'm sure we will find his books all right."

Meanwhile, young Macgruder had been waiting for Armistead to come back to his desk. Now that he had his job back, Macgruder did not need the hundred dollars so badly as before. He thought he would buy the pearl back and give it to Madge that evening. But when he saw Armistead's troubled face, he strangely remembered that his own good fortune began as soon as he sold the ring to Armistead. He decided to wait and see how the pearl affected the fortunes of Armistead.

And Armistead's troubles were beginning. He had heard Marsden—not all he said—but enough to drive everything else out of his mind.

THE man who begins to look for signs and omens always finds them. Things that happen in a natural way—and usually pass unnoticed—then stand out in bold relief as strange and uncanny.

When young Macgruder—with newly awakened suspicions—came to work the next day, he began to look for strange things to happen to Armistead. But small minds see small things. The Bertie Armistead he had known was always immaculately dressed and in good humor. This morning Armistead had a splash of ink on his collar, and a finger-nail on his usually well-manicured hands was ragged and torn—the finger that had on it the Buddha-pearl ring.

Macgruder asked about it pleasantly, and was told to mind his own business with acerbity.

"That jinx's sure working," thought Arthur. "I don't want it back. A hundred dollars is more lucky—to me."

Bertie Armistead had other things to worry him. His books were to be examined—and he knew what they would show all too well. Two working-days, then a Sunday, and then another working-day before he sailed—he couldn't possibly cover up his shortage in that time; and he hadn't the money, even if he had the time. Marsden usually visited the cashier early in the morning, but on this day he was in the cage a half a dozen times. And each time he entered Armistead was in dread lest the old man should request a private interview in the inner office. Armistead felt the hour of retribution coming to him swiftly. He found himself starting when any one came unexpectedly upon him. He saw exposure in front of him everywhere—on the books—in each letter—on Marsden's hard old face—in Fox's manner—always present and ready to cry out—and then the Tombs, the court-room, Sing Sing.

The next day—Saturday—Marsden was absent. This gave Armistead time and opportunity—with his books close at hand—to think over ways and means for his flight. He must run—he knew that. To Bermuda—absurd, but it would help to have them think so. Marsden & Fox would have to provide the money for a longer flight—he would fool them, as they thought they were fooling him. He examined his prospective receipts. He saw, with what he could hold out of the bank that day and what he might reasonably expect on Monday, he would have a chance to take thirty thousand dollars. There was a risk—with a meddling old fool like Marsden—but it was a risk that could not be avoided.

ARMISTEAD'S plan was simplified now. Ostentatiously he would have Macgruder spend Monday making final arrangements for the Bermuda trip. He himself would make the other arrangements. At the close of Monday he would put the money in his brief-case—he always carried one—and take it to his apartment in the Verdun. He decided that both Marsden and Fox, believing that he was going to Bermuda, would have the books gone over slowly—not in haste. He believed there was no danger on Sunday—and then, only Monday was left!

Sunday was always a dull day for Armistead, but this Sunday dragged more slowly and tediously than any he had ever known. He found reports of several defaulters in the Sunday papers—and noted with satisfaction that most of them got away safely. To relieve the ordinary tedium of Sunday evening, it was his custom to play cards with four friends—the Verdun poker club, they facetiously called these weekly meetings, which met in the rooms of the five members in rotation. Shortly after dark he looked at the heavy bronze clock on the mantel over his desk. It was nearly eight—the time for the game. He arose and went to his chiffonier. There he picked up the Buddha-pearl ring and looked at it steadily.

"It is curious," he thought reflectively. "These Orientals appear to have strange powers. The bad luck from this thing seems to be in developing the evil things in a man's life. I no sooner had it than I heard Marsden tell Fox to look over my books. It is absurd—and would not be worth a thought—if I were not in such a hole."

Armistead slipped the ring on his finger and looked at it.

"If I'm a bad loser to-night," he muttered grimly, "like the Jap, I'll wish it on some one—the biggest winner. That ought to be Jeff."

A few moments later, Armistead entered the apartment of Gilbert Jeffreys, on the floor above. The other four were already there: Tellerman, his red-veined face disclosing his contempt for the Volstead act; Dr. Simpson, small, sharp, dark and bald; Carlson, gray, jolly, big and fat, and Jeffreys, short, heavy, with his blond pompadour more sleek than usual. They chided Armistead for holding up the game for five minutes.

The cards ran against Armistead from the start, making him more nervous and irritable. He bought chips again and again, only to see them race across the table to the voracious Jeffreys. He began to hate Jeffreys as the others jested and commented on "Armie's ill luck."

"I do believe it's this rotten pearl!" cried Armistead petulantly as the game drew to a close.

He held up the ring for them all to see, and gave the history as Macgruder had given it to him. The ring was passed around, with varying comments as to things unlucky in games of chance. As Carlson, the last man to get it, handed it back, he said, with that thin laugh that so often belongs to a fat man:

"It's one o'clock—we can play just one more hand. Slip on your ring, Armistead—and we can see if the hoodoo dares to act while we are all watching."

The game went on until there was a

fat jack-pot three times sweetened. Then Armistead found that Jeffreys had dealt him a full house—aces and kings. Armistead stood pat; Tellerman and Simpson drew two cards each, and Carlson, with the usual remark as to being honest, drew three.

"I'll stack up against that pat hand with a Buddha-pearl draw," said Jeffreys gaily, dealing himself four cards.

Carlson and Tellerman dropped out soon, and Armistead bet confidently until Simpson called. Armistead put down his full house, leaned forward ready to take in the pot. Simpson threw down his cards with a grunt of dissatisfaction. Jeffreys, with an irritating laugh, looked at Armistead and laid down—four twos.

At once there were noisy comments upon the wonderful draw—from all except Armistead. Jeffreys loudly told of his amazement when he saw his draw, and laughingly said his remark as to a Buddha-pearl draw was only the ordinary jest. Armistead sat silent. Somehow, Jeffreys invariably got these good draws if there was a big pot and it was his deal. Still, Armistead had been watching closely and had seen nothing objectionable before the play beyond Jeffreys' queer habit of resting both elbows on the table, with both hands below the edge, as he said, "That reminds me—I know it's an old one—but it's good—and if you fellows have heard it—stop me—" And, as usual, he had been stopped.

As Jeffreys drew in the pot, he raised his eyes to Armistead and said, with a slight trace of sarcasm,

"I like that pearl so much I'll give you one hundred dollars for it."

"It's yours!" cried Armistead, quickly passing over the ring. "I came with three hundred dollars and I'm three hundred dollars in the hole. I'm off that ring for good."

"Let's play to-morrow night—a farewell game—to test my luck with the Buddha pearl," said Jeffreys.

"So far as I am concerned," said Armistead, "that test will have to wait until I return."

"I won't have the Buddha pearl so long as that. I only wanted it to give to a"—Jeffreys hesitated a moment and then added—"friend."

"Who is the friend?" asked Armistead, sharply and deliberately. "I'd like to keep track of the luck of this pearl."

Jeffreys made no answer. The others were dimly conscious that there was a little more feeling than usual over the result of the game. Jeffreys' aggressive manner, when he won, was a shade more offensive than heretofore, and Armistead plainly was discomfited.

But all this was on the surface. Both Jeffreys and Armistead saw more than the other three. Armistead knew who the friend was. He knew that it was intended that he should know. As he looked at his three hundred dollars in cash, his I. O. U. for two hundred dollars and the Buddha pearl lying before Jeffreys, he resolved that Jeffreys should not take the friend from him.

"Come on, Armistead," said Jeffreys banteringly; "just a few hours of play—let's determine whether it is the pearl—or just your kind of play. Say we begin at nine."

"I couldn't get here possibly before ten—" began Armistead.

"Come in at ten!" cried Carlson jovially, in an effort to restore good feeling. "You will only miss an hour. But, Jeff, you must surely wear the Buddha-pearl ring—or I'm out."

"If he will agree to that, I'll make it a point to come in at ten," said Armistead.

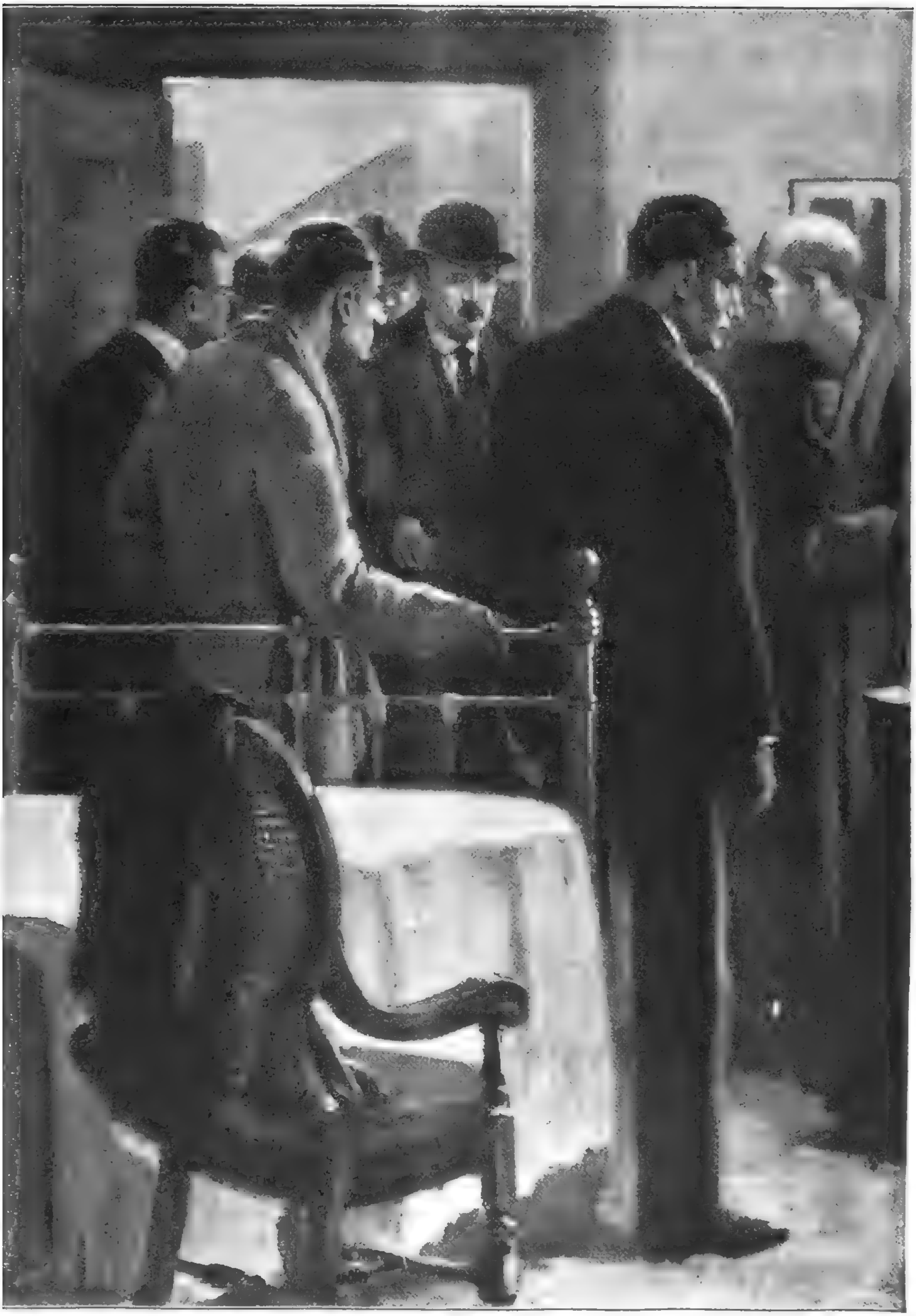
"Done!" cried Jeffreys. "Nine o'clock for all of us—ten for Armistead."

EARLY on Monday evening, Gilbert Jeffreys made his way to the apartment of the friend to whom he intended giving the Buddha pearl ring. The character of the apartment may be sufficiently described as the abode of—to use Mr. Howells' words—"the imperfectly monogamous." This friend, the Titian-haired dancer, Mlle. Estelle DuBois, had long been the friend of Bertie Armistead, but a recent disagreement had caused her to look kindly upon the attentions of Jeffreys.

It was Jeffreys' intention to show her the ring, tell her he had won it from Armistead, and when he had shown them at the game that evening that there was no bad luck in the pearl, to give it to her on Tuesday evening, when Armistead was on his way to Bermuda.

But Jeffreys found Mlle. Estelle busily packing a steamer trunk. She greeted him with a torrent of excited words.

"Isn't it fine? We are going to fly—Bertie and I. We've made up—this morning. Oh, I've been so rushed all day! We



A single glance told them all who had murdered Bertie Armistead.

are going to Rio. Don't tell anybody. It was awfully sudden. You know we had a row—he said I spent too much money. But he doesn't have to care now. His uncle has just died and left him a big wad—a great big wad of money. The firm thinks he is going to Bermuda—that's the reason for the secrecy. Oh, we've been so clever about it! Isn't that a lark? Don't tell a soul."

Jeffreys didn't mention the Buddha pearl. He promised secrecy and started for the Verdun. He walked slowly, thinking over this new development. So Armistead was running away! Why? He had a legacy—but he hadn't mentioned it before to any one. Jeffreys laughed.

"Uncle!" he thought. "I guess Marsden & Fox don't know that they are the deceased uncle—yet—and won't find it out until he reaches Rio."

ON REACHING the Verdun, Jeffreys saw Armistead slipping out of the elevator carrying a small brown bag. Jeffreys nodded and went up-stairs. The big wad worried him—it must be in the room—now. Armistead's rooms were just under his. It would be easy to slip down the fire-escape and help himself to some of it. Armistead had gone out with a bag, probably to Estelle's, and would not return for some time. Besides, if he should discover his loss, he was in no position to make a row about it. The chances were he would not discover his loss until he was well out to sea. It seemed so perfectly safe—just to take a few thousands—not all—and discovery was so remote and unlikely.

A few minutes later, Jeffreys was in Armistead's apartment. He made a light and went to the desk. He found there the brief-case, full of bills. If there had not been so much he could have helped himself and got away in good time. But he stood dumbfounded, looking at it. Suddenly he became conscious some one was in the room. He turned—and faced Armistead.

Armistead dropped his brown bag and rushed towards Jeffreys. Startled at being discovered—realizing that Armistead was bigger and stronger—Jeffreys seized the bronze clock on the mantle and hurled it at Armistead—with all too good aim. It struck the onrushing man in the forehead, and he dropped like a log.

The terrified Jeffreys looked down at the man on the floor as the blood formed in a pool about his head. The slayer knelt, opened Armistead's coat and waistcoat and put his hand on his heart. It was still. Then Jeffreys saw that he had left the imprint of his hand, in blood, on the white shirt. He froze at the thought of fingerprints; he looked at his hand; he realized that he still had on his gloves. In the awful silence the ticking of the clock was nerve-racking. An idea came. He broke the pendulum, moved the hands to nine-five, picked up the brief-case, turned off the light and went back to his own rooms by way of the fire-escape. He looked about for a place to hide the brief-case and his gloves. He found it. Then he changed his clothes, and went to Simpson's rooms, reaching there at eight-fifty-five. At nine o'clock, Tellerman and Carlson came in. They both asked for the Buddha pearl, and Jeffreys held up his hand and showed it to them.

"Now, Carlson," cried Tellerman, "here's where we trim him good! We'll get some of our money back—for sure."

The game began. Jeffreys lost steadily, so steadily that he began to fear the Buddha pearl. Things had gone wrong ever since he gained it. A lump came in his throat; his heart quickened. The perspiration came out on his forehead. What if there should be some power in the cursed thing—after all? To make matters worse, Carlson and Tellerman constantly referred to the pearl and Jeffreys' nervousness in a rasping way. At length Jeffreys decided that he must get rid of the ring—and before the body was found. He looked at his wrist-watch; it was nine-thirty. Armistead was due in a half-hour.

Jeffreys braced himself and went on, while the others laughed at his failures to win and kept thrusting the Buddha-pearl's luck before him. One determination filled his mind now: he must prove to himself that there was no occult power in the Buddha pearl. If he could only win one hand and break the curse! At last he looked upon a pat hand with so much satisfaction that the others noticed it.

"Jeff's going to break the curse this time," said Carlson. "Look at his face—fellows—watch him—watch him!"

But Dr. Simpson overtopped Jeffreys' four jacks with a straight flush of spades on a two-card draw.

While the others howled gleefully, Jeffreys jumped from his seat and touched the bell. It was answered by Rastus, a tall, slim, shambling negro with a perpetual grin.

"Rastus," cried Jeffreys, sharply, "see this pearl—the little squat god, Buddha, inside? Do you want it?"

"I sure do," said Rastus. "It looks fine."

"I'm going to give it to you," said Jeffreys. "But don't play alley-golf while you are wearing it; it's a sure hoodoo."

"There ain't no such thing," said Rastus confidently. "It's all in the way you roll the bones."

Rastus put the ring on his finger, grinned and withdrew. The game went on. Jeffreys won his first pot amid general laughter.

"It is a shame to have Armie miss all this fun," said Carlson. "He sure would have enjoyed Jeff's losing."

"It's time he was here," said Tellerman. "I'm ten-five."

"Let's go down and get him," said Dr. Simpson. "He'll enjoy Jeff's backing down on keeping the pearl—even if Jeff doesn't."

And the four men marched down the stairs with the doctor in the lead. As they neared the door, Simpson stopped. "Now line up, hands on shoulders, and we'll whistle the 'Rogue's March' as we march about the room," he said.

The doctor knocked at the door. There was no answer. He knocked louder and then tried the door. It was unlocked. The four men entered; the doctor turned on the light—but the whistle died at what they saw.

There lay Armistead, his head resting in a pool of blood. Jeffreys knelt first and examined the imprint of the hand on the dead man's shirt. Then the doctor knelt and felt the body.

"My God!" cried Simpson. "He's been dead only an hour."

"Look at the clock," whispered Jeffreys, with emotion. "The hands are at nine-five—he was slain just after we began to play."

"He must have died instantly," replied the doctor slowly.

WITHIN ten minutes from the time of the discovery of his body by his friends, the apartment of Bertie Armistead was crowded with men. They stood around in groups, talking and looking furtively at the dead man on the floor with the clock close to his head and the little brown bag a few feet away, until two plain-clothes men arrived. The elder of these ordered the room cleared except the four friends, the superintendent and the bell-boys, foremost of whom was Rastus, wearing his Buddha pearl.

Burke, the elder of the two plain-clothes men, took charge. He went over to the four friends, asked a few questions as to the name and occupation of Armistead. Then he knelt down and examined the imprint on the shirt.

"That's a very valuable clue—is it not?" asked Jeffreys.

Burke shook his head dubiously. "This murderer knew what he was about," he said. "He wore a glove—it shows premeditation."

Burke began his questions of each in turn. He wanted to know who had found the body, who had been the last to see him alive. The latter question brought out the information that Rastus had taken Armistead up in the elevator two hours before, carrying the brown bag. Burke turned to Browne, the superintendent, a nervous, fussy little man with a bald spot at the crown of his head, and directed him to open the bag. Browne drew out two bottles of Scotch whisky wrapped in newspapers. Rastus lost his grin and trembled. The quick eye of Burke noticed this.

"Do you know where Mr. Armistead got that whisky?" he asked of Rastus.

"I didn't sell it to him," said Rastus, his grin coming back in an embarrassed way.

"Nobody said you did," was the quick rejoinder.

The doctor walked over and looked at one of the bottles carefully.

"It looks like your whisky, Rastus," he said.

"How do you know?" asked Burke.

"When we want Scotch, we ask Rastus for the key," replied the doctor. "Then we go down to a closet alongside the coal-bin, take what we want and leave a ten-dollar bill in the place of each bottle. The key is then returned to Rastus. Rastus has scruples about seeing his customers."

"Where is that key now?" said Burke to Rastus.

Rastus handed him the key.

"You gave this to Mr. Armistead, early this evening?"

Rastus nodded.

"And you collected twenty dollars since then?"

"I ain't had time to go after it yet," said Rastus dolefully, fingering his Buddha pearl.

Burke handed the key to a policeman and directed him to get the money, if it was still there. Rastus offered to show the way, but Burke asked the doctor to do that. In fifteen minutes the two men returned, and the policeman handed the money to Burke.

"It was a fresh case—only two bottles out," said the policeman.

Burke turned his eyes coolly on Rastus for a full two minutes. Rastus lost his grin and shook under the stare.

"I-warn-you-that-anything-you-may-say-may-be-used-against-you," said Burke to Rastus, as if it were all one word.

Rastus trembled violently.

" 'Fore God, I didn't kill him, boss!"

"Lift up that clock," said Burke.

"I'll get blood on me—no—no!"

Burke insisted, but Rastus was stubborn. Browne broke in with the remark: "There are four witnesses—myself, the telephone-girl and the two other operators—who can testify that Rastus was never out of sight long enough to commit the murder."

Burke waited quietly until Browne had finished, then he said to Rastus,

"What percentage of your profits do you give to Mr. Browne?"

"We split fifty-fifty," said Rastus, and Browne grew red and subsided.

"You come with me," said Burke to Rastus.

"It's easy," whispered a policeman to Jeffreys. "The old man's got him sure. We ought to know before morning."

"Is Rastus under arrest?" asked Browne.

"He's a material witness," said Burke grimly.

"Mr. Browne," cried Rastus excitedly, "you send for Thomas Jefferson Johnson! He's my lawyer—he's a Muskeegee boy. Tell him I want him to come quick."

Burke took Rastus down-stairs, accompanied by Browne. As Rastus passed through the doorway, he shook hands with Browne and in that way handed him the Buddha pearl, which Rastus had taken from his finger as they came down the elevator.

For six hours Rastus told and retold where he got the whisky, what he did each evening, and the evening of the murder especially, how much he made, and for a score of times, with the sweat pouring from him, declared, " 'Fore God, I didn't kill him, boss!"

And during the last two hours of the grilling of Rastus, the Muskeegee boy roared and fumed in the station-house, demanding that he have "access to his client."

At six o'clock in the morning, two of Burke's assistants came into the station-house and told him that there was a cloud of witnesses ready to swear that Rastus had not been away from the elevator for five minutes during the whole night. Burke decided to let Rastus go, and Rastus went out arm in arm with the Muskeegee boy, who assured Rastus that he owed his release to the fight he had put up for him.

Rastus went back to the Verdun. Browne was still there, and offered Rastus the Buddha pearl.

"Keep away from me!" cried Rastus. "I don't want it—any more—it sure is a hoodoo. I didn't have it half an hour before I was arrested for murder."

THOUGH Gilbert Jeffreys had expected the eventual release of Rastus, he was startled to find Rastus at the doorway early the next morning. Jeffreys came to the conclusion that the police must have another clue. He turned back and hurried to Dr. Simpson's rooms. At his suggestion, the doctor called the others together.

"The police practically admit they have blundered as to Rastus," began Jeffreys. He paused a moment and then went on with a show of suppressed emotion: "We owe it, as friends of Armistead, to see that the slayer is brought to justice. We must not let the police—in their usual way—mismanage this case. I will give one thousand dollars if each of you will do the same, and hire Burington to work on the case for us—and Armistead's family."

"That's noble of you Jeff!" cried Carlson impulsively, and the others agreed in silence.

The four men found Burington, a typical policeman—keen, stout, gray and middle-aged, eager to get into the case.

"I'll put John Dean, my best operator, on. I regard him as the best in New York," said Burington enthusiastically. "He's not much to look at, but he's a fine detective."

Burington touched his bell. A tall, raw-boned, clean-shaven man, over six feet, loped into the room. Burington saw at once that his visitors were not impressed, and said quickly, "He looks like Old Abe himself, and he is as shrewd and straight."

Dean understood and smiled. Jeffreys, acting as spokesman, quickly outlined the case, told of the wishes of himself and his friends, and the release of Rastus, whom the police at first were sure was the murderer.

"That was too late for the morning papers," said Dean, quietly. "I thought the police were too quick there—even if they had reason to suspect him."

"How does it impress you—at first?" asked Jeffreys.

"The use of a clock as a weapon," said Dean slowly, "indicates to me that the crime was committed in a surprise or in passion. A robber would have been armed; this murderer evidently was not. It looks to me like an inexperienced sneak-thief, who was surprised—a depraved nature suddenly awakened."

"I must say," said Jeffreys quickly, "I can't quite follow you there. Mr. Armistead was going away—that was generally known. The slayer may have imagined that he had the money for his trip in his room and gone after it. Mr. Armistead discovered him—and met his death. But how could a robber get in and out of such an apartment unnoticed?"

"That may seem improbable," said Dean, "but it is possible. Still, I lean to an inexperienced sneak-thief—surprised."

"My good fellow," exclaimed Jeffreys, "it was too bold for a sneak thief, more like a man of higher intelligence—a well-planned robbery! Ah, but the clock furnishes a good clue—the hands stopped at the exact hour—nine-five—when it struck Armistead."

"Possibly," said Dean.

"Why, man! The pendulum was broken. That proves it beyond a doubt," said Jeffreys. "But how did that murderer get out of that apartment?"

"Didn't Mr. Armistead's apartment lead out to the rear fire-escape?" asked Burington.

"All the apartments do," said Jeffreys. "He could have gone down that way—it was both dark and threatening to rain—to the basement, and then to the street. That would have been easy. No one had seen him, and he was safe—forever."

"Not safe forever," said Dean. "In a crime like this, the murderer cannot keep his own secret. For a time he may, the excitement of concealing his crime sustaining him, but only for a time."

"I wish I could agree with you," said Jeffreys, with unusual decision. "But so many murders remain unsolved nowadays that I have grave doubts as to the solution of this one. A man intelligent enough to wear gloves—as this one was—with discretion, courage and prudence, has more than an even chance to escape."

"No," said Dean slowly; "it will be different when this murderer finds that his secret has become his whole life. His discretion will turn to cunning, his courage to fear, and his prudence will lead him to do strange things, things he himself, unblinded by his guilty secret, would wonder at another doing."

"Let us look at it coldly," said Jeffreys sharply. "This man has only to keep still, do nothing, and he is safe."

"He can't keep still; he knows more than anybody else; he must do something to hold off what, to him, is an always impending exposure," said Dean shrewdly.

IN HIS report, three days later, Dean revealed to the four men that Armistead was a defaulter. He noticed they were stunned. Dean went on to say that the police said that Armistead must have had thirty thousand dollars in his room when he was slain, and this money was in a brief-case. The police were looking for some one who knew that he had this money. Then Dean added:

"The police are trying to locate a Mlle. Estelle Du Bois, a dancer. Do any of you know her?"

"We have all met her," said Jeffreys quickly. "But she couldn't possibly have got in and out of a bachelor apartment like the Verdun without some one seeing her. Besides, she could not possibly lift that heavy clock and throw it with force enough to kill him. It is as much as I could do—or any man here," he added sharply. "Then, too, Browne is always on the watch. I'll stake my life she didn't do it."

"I think as you do," said Dean quietly, "but there is a chance that she knew of the money and had an accomplice."

"Do they suspect any one in particular of being the accomplice?" asked Jeffreys.

Dean rubbed his chin thoughtfully for a

moment and replied, "Everybody in the apartment-house is a suspect: the police are looking into Browne's actions on the night of the murder."

"I see—his hooch-running is against him," said Tellerman. "Have you talked to him?"

"Not yet," replied Dean. "The police have had him all day."

"Suppose you try now, and we will wait here," said Jeffreys.

Dean found the fussy little superintendent in a high state of nervous excitement—white and shaking.

"They are trying to put it on me now," said Browne, almost in tears. "I can prove where I was by many witnesses for all the time but a few minutes, say, not more than fifteen."

"Where were you then?" asked Dean.

"On the roof, about nine o'clock," replied Browne. "I was making my regular nightly tour."

"That's bad, that lapse in time," said Dean.

The telephone-girl, seated next to Browne, put her hand over the mouthpiece.

"Mr. Browne," she said, "here's a call for Mr. Armistead. What'll I say?"

"Ask who it is," said Browne, shaking.

The girl spoke into the telephone and then replied, "It's a wireless message."

"Take it and tell them to send a copy."

The girl wrote the message slowly and handed it to Browne, who, in turn, passed it to Dean. It read:

> Contemptible. You can't shake me that way. If you don't cable passage-money back, I'll wire Marsden. ESTELLE.

"Burke wants that," said Dean. "Where did you get that queer ring you have on?"

"That ring?" said Browne, looking at the Buddha pearl. "Oh, I had forgotten all about that in my troubles. Everybody who has had it has got into trouble. Here, you can have it. I'm off it forever."

While Dean was examining the pearl, Browne told him its history, at least what he knew of it. Dean grinned, and said, "I'll take a chance on it."

An elderly woman, whose duties were to look after the storeroom, came up and interrupted the discussion as to the Buddha pearl. She had been crying.

"Mr. Browne," she said, "can't you make them detectives leave me alone? I don't know anything about the murder. They keep pestering me to tell 'em things about you. I won't tell 'em anything. They tried to make me tell 'em where you were on the night of the murder."

"I was here all night. Tell 'em that, Mary."

"I didn't tell 'em you were on the roof at nine o'clock——"

"How did you know that?" asked Browne excitedly.

"I had to wait until you came down, and I missed my train."

"That completes my alibi," cried Browne, "and just after I got rid of that Buddha pearl! It's your turn next," he added, turning to Dean. "The police will get something on you—better get rid of it."

DEAN grinned in silence. A few minutes later he went to Dr. Simpson's rooms and told the story of Browne's alibi and the part Browne believed the Buddha pearl had in establishing it. The four men were amused, but suddenly became serious when Dean went on to tell of the wireless from Mlle. Du Bois. Jeffreys, as usual, was the first to recover.

"It's a shame," he said quickly, "to leave that girl stranded in Rio. Let's send her two hundred and fifty dollars each, tell her Armistead didn't desert her, but was murdered, and to come back at once, if she knows anything."

"Won't the police attend to that?" asked Carlson doubtfully.

"They will communicate with her undoubtedly," said Jeffreys; "but there can be no real harm in Armistead's friends sending her a little money—for his sake."

"If she is as wise as I think she is," said Tellerman shrewdly, "with the money, she won't hurry back to get into a scandal."

But Jeffreys was insistent, and the others yielded. Two hours later, in his own room, he regretted that he had not kept still, and wondered whether his prudent impulse to keep Mlle. Du Bois in Rio Janeiro might not lead the police to the man who knew that Armistead had just received a "legacy from a deceased uncle."

Dean looked upon the sending of the money to Rio Janeiro as a "boy's trick." He did not feel called upon to protest; indeed, he was thinking more about the

Buddha pearl, and amused at the serious way in which it was regarded by all concerned. He was still more amused when he went to his room and found a reprimand from Burington, telling him his reports were mere rewrites of the newspaper stories. Dean looked at the time on the note. It was just thirty minutes after he received the Buddha pearl from Browne.

Dean sat down—and laughed.

IN response to the reprimand, Dean went to the Burington offices the next morning. He arrived there a half-hour before the chief—not by accident, but by design. He wanted to show the Buddha pearl to Mary Randall, the stenographer, and ask her if she was brave enough to wear it as an engagement-ring. Mary examined the ring critically, and Dean watched with admiration as he saw her color rise, her brown eyes snap, her red head toss, and her short nose tilt to a saucier angle, as though defying luck of all kinds.

"What a charming, odd thing it is!" she said gaily. "Of course I'm not afraid of it. How silly of them all to think of luck following an inanimate thing like this!"

"Of course I don't want anything ill to happen to you. But you watch your step. If anything goes wrong, give it back to me."

"You want another call-down, do you?" she said.

"No; but I'll give it to some fellow I don't like—as the Jap did," said Dean.

When Burington came in he was in better humor than he was when he wrote his message of the night before. Dean and he went over the case carefully, and Burington called up Jeffreys to ask if he was satisfied with his reports. Jeffreys said he and his friends were greatly pleased with Dean's work, and Burington apologized for his note of the night before.

"There is one curious thing about this case, though it doesn't quite belong to the case enough to put it in the reports," said Dean, "and that is the part played by the Buddha pearl."

For the second time that morning Dean went over the history of the ring, and Burington asked him to show him the trouble-maker. But Mary declined to take off her engagement ring, and went into Burington's office still wearing it. After ten minutes of jesting, Burington suggested that it would be a good thing for Mary to take Dean's place, and Dean to take Mary's place, so that the hoodoo might have a fair chance to work.

"Let me see," said Mary, entering into the spirit of the jest. "The sailor had it first; he lost money and broke his ankle. The next owner lost his job and his girl, and the next was murdered. The bell-hop got it, and was accused of murder. He gave it to the superintendent and he was accused of the murder. Mr. Dean got it, and only had it for half an hour, and then was called down—hard. Is that all?"

"No; that is not quite straight," said Dean. "The third owner we know about was found to be a defaulter before he was murdered. He gave it to a friend, who lost so much at poker that he gave it to a crap-player."

"Who had it when the murder was committed?" Mary asked.

"I think," said Dean, with his usual caution, "Mr. Jeffreys had it then—the one who lost at cards."

"Better look him up carefully," said Mary.

"Oh, I say, Mary!" cried Burington.

"You never can tell what a man will do for money. Did he know Armistead was a defaulter?"

"Not until I told him," said Dean. "At least, he says so."

"Naturally," said Mary. "But why not find out all about the Buddha pearl by sending for the captain? Get it at first hand."

Burington laughed heartily. Then he became serious. "There isn't a thing in it, but it would be curious to hear what the sailor had to say. Hunt him up—we can't overlook the least thing in this business."

Dean found Captain Maynard in the office of Marsden & Fox, trying to make a compromise over the damaged crate. He readily consented to go with Dean to Burington's office. With Burington, Dean and Mary as attentive listeners, the captain told at length how he got the Buddha pearl, his voyage, and his troubles. It was a full hour before he finished. Then he turned to Mary.

"You've got it now," he said. "You make it all right."

"I? How?" exclaimed Mary eagerly.

"The way the priest cursed it," said Maynard solemnly, "was this: The Buddha pearl was always to bring bad luck to a man, but good luck to a woman. I warned that young fellow to give it to a girl."

"And my first thought was to find out who owned it when the murder was committed!" cried Mary. "Do, oh, do look that up. It can't do any harm—just to know that!"

Burington laughed.

"It will be interesting, Dean," he said, "but by no means conclusive in a court of law. See if you can find out."

A COLD, hard, drizzling February rain was falling when Dean returned to the Verdun. The corridors were deserted, except for a few reporters and policemen. He set about verifying his impression that Jeffreys had possession of the Buddha pearl at the time of the murder. It did not prove a difficult task. Casual references to the pearl brought forth a stream of words from both Rastus and Browne. Each of them apparently believed in the uncanny power of the pearl the priest had cursed. There was not much new in what they said, but there was a turn to it all that caused Dean to ask Burington to come to the Verdun, after arranging with Browne for the use of a vacant apartment on the floor below that of Jeffreys.

Burington came at once. Dean began his statement in the old-fashioned way—at the beginning.

"Jeffreys," he said, "after paying Armistead one hundred dollars for the pearl on the night before the murder, gave it to Rastus for nothing a half-hour before the body was discovered. Bad luck——"

"Do you mean to say that you, a sane detective, think this miserable trinket has unusual powers?" interrupted Burington.

Dean smiled. "No," he went on, quietly; "but I am not overlooking how it can affect lawbreakers, always superstitious. Here is a man who plays cards like a sharp—I have watched him. He noisily gives the pearl to a bell-hop just before the murder is discovered. He insists, as a friendly act to the dead man, on sending money to Mlle. Du Bois, a tip to stay away, and I laughed at it as a boy's trick then; but now——"

"But now?" asked Burington.

"I don't know," said Dean, thoughtfully rubbing his chin. "It's just the sort of thing a guilty man would do. He is forever saying the murderer has only to keep still—but he can't keep still. His interest is abnormal."

"But to engage us—that is unbelievable courage even in a murderer," said Burington.

"Yes; courage, but not unbelievable courage," said Dean slowly. "It fits in. Courage is relative. The thing can be reasoned out. The quick release of Rastus shook him. He acted courageously. He boldly persuaded his friends to join him in watching the police for their next move."

"Let me think a moment," said Burington, with a grim smile. "The relativity of courage is a new thing to me. Go on," he added, after a moment of silence."

"His unusual activities have made me suspicious of him. Browne told me that the bell-boys were surprised at Jeffreys' gift of the Buddha pearl to Rastus. They looked upon Jeffreys as an exacting tightwad. He has become generous with his tips since the murder. I can't believe that the slayer left the apartment-house that night carrying a brief-case. Too many on watch at nine o'clock."

"I must say I'm not entirely convinced," said Burington doubtfully. "But it has an uncanny appeal—curse that pearl and its luck! Just what do you propose?"

"They play in Carlson's rooms their first game of cards since the death of Armistead four days ago. Jeffreys suggested that the slayer used the fire-escape as a getaway. It cannot do any harm to investigate the tip of the man who employed us. His rooms are one flight up, two windows over. Let's see what he does in his own room just after the game. If we are caught at it, we only were testing out his suggestion and looked in as we passed down from the top."

"We can try that out," said Burington sharply. "You report to them at eight—I'll be here at nine."

Dean went to Carlson's apartment just before the game began.

Jeffreys, as Dean expected, expressed his grief at the failure of the police to find the slayer of Armistead, and the others acquiesced in his opinion that the crime seemed likely to become one of the unsolved mysteries. When the game finally started. Jeffreys invited Dean to join, and Dean sat in long enough to learn that the game was scheduled to stop at one o'clock.

Dean reached the apartment he had hired

from Browne at nine-five. He found Burington there, and grimly called attention to the hour. They discussed Jeffreys briefly; then relapsed into silence to wait for one o'clock. At eleven, Dean went out on the fire-escape for a few minutes.

"They are still playing," he said, on his return. "One flight up, two windows over; sounds easy when you say it, but the fire-escape is like glass. It's raining hard and freezing as it falls."

As it neared twelve, Burington turned off the light, and the two men went over and sat in darkness by the exit to the fire-escape. At twelve-forty-five, Burington decided that it was time to begin the watch on the landing above, and they went out, with Burington in the lead.

They crawled up the slippery steps, the hard, drizzling rain beating in their faces, to the floor above, and then along on their hands and knees. They noted with satisfaction when they came opposite to Jeffreys' window that the sash was up about half a foot, the shade even with the sash. Each took his stand on an opposite side of the window, crowding against the wall as a protection from the freezing rain.

Jeffreys' room was in darkness still. It was twenty minutes before a light appeared. They felt, rather than saw, some one come to the window, raise the shade and look out for a few moments. Then they heard the shade pulled down and waited. After a brief interval, both men got down on their knees and peered into the room.

Dean felt like shouting at what he saw. The woman's luck of the Buddha pearl had won!

In the background, on his knees, with his back to the window, was Jeffreys. He was kneeling in front of a leather couch, turned over on its side, with a large section of the canvas underneath ripped open and hanging down.

They watched Jeffreys draw out a gun, then the brief-case, then a pair of blood-stained gloves, which he looked at for a full minute. He put the gloves back, picked up the brief-case, and, taking some bills from his pocket, put them in carefully. His luck at cards had returned.

Burington rose to his feet, and Dean followed. Burington motioned Dean to take hold of the sash, and Dean saw that the chief had his automatic in his hand. Suddenly Burington made a quick upward motion with his left hand. Dean threw up the sash, tore the shade from its fastenings, and Burington jumped into the room, followed closely by Dean.

"Hands up!" cried Burington.

But quick as they were, Jeffreys was on his feet, with his gun in his hand. Dean seized his arm and threw it upward—the report broke the stillness of midnight. Dean struggled with Jeffreys, while Burington hovered around the two struggling men until he got a fair mark. When he did, he rapped Jeffreys sharply on the head, and Jeffreys dropped like a log to the floor. A moment later he was handcuffed.

With Burington, gun in hand, standing over him, Jeffreys regained a sitting posture and watched Dean make his examination. Dean drew out the blood-stained gloves from the lounge, and then opened the brief-case. Slowly he read aloud the inscription on the inside: "Albert A. Armistead."

And during nearly all of the time, some one—it turned out afterward to be Carlson—kept knocking heavily and repeatedly for entrance.

Slowly putting the money and the gloves in the brief-case, Dean rose and opened the door. Men of all sizes and shapes, in all sorts of dress and undress, crowded in. With them were a half-dozen detectives, and in the foremost rank were Dr. Simpson, Carlson and Tellerman, with Rastus and Browne close behind.

A single glance told them all who had murdered Bertie Armistead.

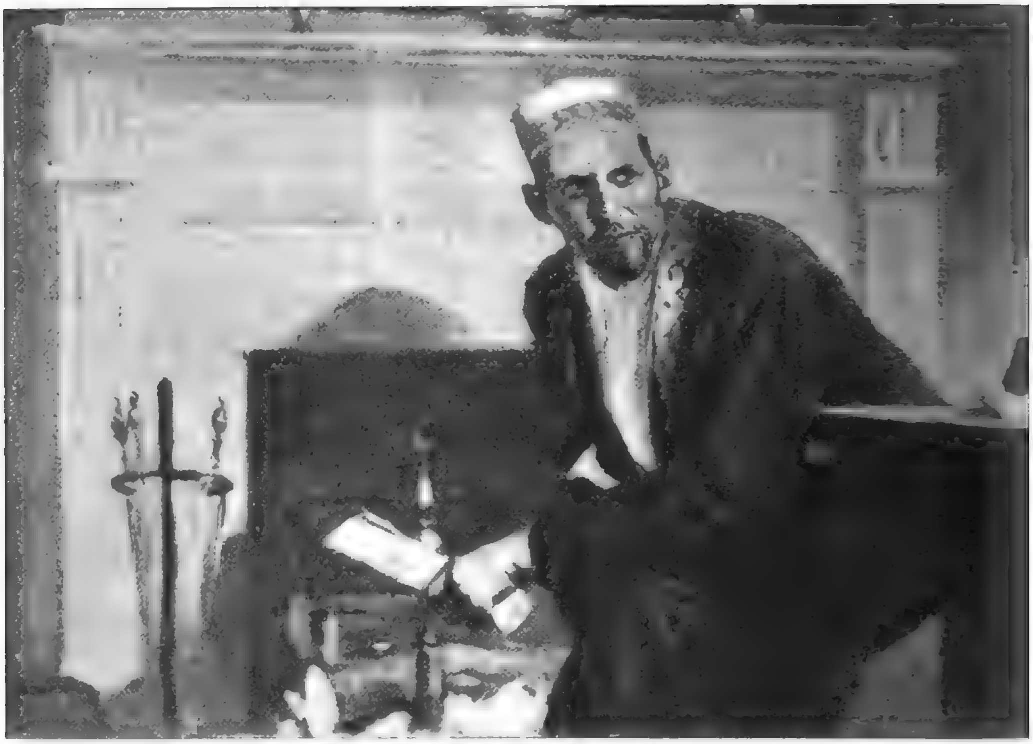
WHEN Dean made his report to Mary Randall, seated at her side, the next evening, Mary held up the Buddha-pearl engagement-ring and looked at it steadily.

"It is all so uncanny and strange," she said slowly. "Do you really suppose there can be anything in it?"

"Certainly not," said Dean emphatically. "The sailor gave the ring a bad name and each of the others attributed the natural results of his misdeeds to something outside of himself."

"Nevertheless," said Mary earnestly, knitting her brows, "you must solemnly promise never, never, to touch the Buddha pearl again."

And Dean promised.



Still kneeling on the hearth, Hamoud contemplated the other as though he were seeing him
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SACRIFICE

A Novel of Lo

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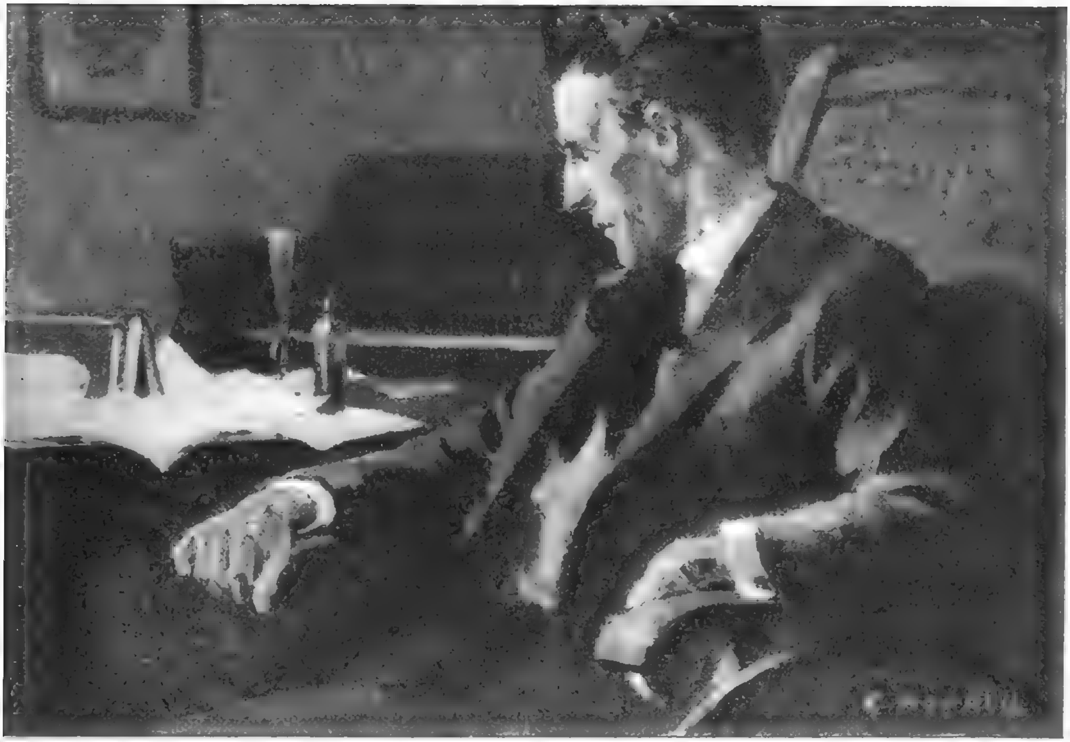
THE tragic end of Lilla Delliver's romance with Lawrence Teck seemed to show that for a nature such as hers Fate has decreed that life should hold no peace. The day after their marriage—the courtship had been very brief—Teck had to return to his field of exploration in Africa, and Lilla, who had intended accompanying him as far as London, was kept in New York by the mortal illness of the aunt who had brought her up.

Two months later came the news that Teck had been slain by savages, and Lilla recognized as true prophecy the vision that Mme. Zanidov, a Russian with extraordinary psychic powers, had related to her the night she met Teck—a vision of black savages round a body covered with a cloth. The Russian had felt it was some one who loved Lilla.

Then Parr, Teck's valet, returned. He had seen his master fall in a clash between Mambava warriors and the camp police. Then he himself had been dragged away, and of further details of Teck's fate he knew nothing.

In her grief, Lilla grew more restless and morbid than ever. For hers was distinctly the neurotic temperament—always seeking, never finding, always bored. For a time,



or the first time. Of a sudden, the habit of protection grappled with his resolve, and might
he beloved. The newspaper was in his left hand.

By Stephen French Whitman

Mysticism, Adventure

E. Hopper

Died at the Hands of Savages, Re-
Verne Is Removed, Thanks to the
Who Worships Lilla

thoughts of Teck obsessed her. She read everything she could find about the country he had gone to, and even started to learn Arabic, which she knew he must have spoken. Then Cornelius Rysbroek, a former suitor, came back into her life—returned from China, his love for Lilla having made him take up exploring in imitation of Teck. But although by this time her husband was slipping rapidly into the past, Rysbroek could make no progress. It was her beauty alone that attracted him. As to her nature, he had no illusions. "Your nature?" he flung at her on one occasion when she had spoken of a rumor of their engagement as "perfectly monstrous." "What rot! As if that ever attracted me, with its false pretenses of heart, its instability and downright treacheries. What else do you offer?" There was but one answer to this: her beauty.

There was, indeed, no hope for Rysbroek, for Lilla, always seeking—seeking some new sensation and an anodyne for her restlessness—had now found David Verne, a young composer of much promise whom the nervous shock of a great disappointment in love had reduced to a state of invalidism that abruptly checked his career and confined his days to a wheel-chair.

Lilla met him in the home of Brantome,

a fellow musician, one of whose favorite topics of discourse was woman's power to inspire the artist. The idea fascinated her. Here was a promising subject to work upon. She could see herself the inspiration of a great masterpiece. She would give Verne back his health. "Death conquered me once," she thought; "but now I shall conquer Death."

The lessons in Arabic were abandoned, and the teacher, Hamoud-bin-Said, an Omân Arab from Zanzibar—a strange, impassive being, in whom one sensed the aristocrat who had seen better days—dismissed. Lilla had become interested in Hamoud, however, and obtained for him the situation of Verne's personal attendant.

As week followed week, the armor of Verne's misanthropy crumbled away. Lilla had come to him holding beauty in one hand, tenderness in the other. Then, overcome by the hopelessness of his new love—the belief that the memory of Teck formed an impassable barrier—he grew worse. Lilla came to him.

"Do you think I care for that man? I could even hate him now, if it's he who has brought you to this."

"Oh, if I could believe you!"

"I am here to prove it," she said, "in a way that you could never doubt."

That day, at twilight, they were married.

Now began their life together in Verne's Westchester home, with Hamoud always in attendance behind the wheel-chair. Verne, hardly crediting his own happiness, and often tortured by the feeling that Lilla would some time regret her act, began the composition of a great tone-poem. Lilla, all devotion, believed she had written "Finis" to those long pages of a restless, aimless life. But Fate still held much in store.

For Lawrence Teck was not dead. Held in captivity by the Mambava savages, he finally gained his release from their chief and made his way to the coast. There, in an old newspaper, he read an account of Lilla's marriage to Verne. With a simple request to the authorities that they make no report of his showing-up, he started for New York.

WHEN Lilla and David went driving through the country, Hamoud prowled all over the house.

He entered the study, to stare at the autographed music framed on the walls, the manuscript strewn over the center-table, the open piano. A look of contempt appeared upon his face, for one reason, perhaps, because he belonged to the Ibathi sect who looked askance at music, disdaining even the cantatas about the birth of the Prophet. He went out of the study in a rage, slammed the folding doors behind him and stood eying the damask-covered chair in which Lilla usually sat.

He recalled the old tales of the lovers, he a Mohammedan and she a Christian, who always fled away on a magic carpet to the safety of Islam.

If it was an hour appointed for prayer, he went up to his room, closed the door, took the Koran out of his Zanzibar box, a carved and brightly painted chest bound with iron and furnished with padlocks. He opened the Koran but recited the verses from memory, trying to feel behind the words the esoteric meanings expounded in the commentaries. This done, he took out from his bosom the talisman that he wore attached to a silver chain—a silver disk having on one side a square made up of sacred characters and on the other side the seal of Solomon. The talisman recalled to him the careless days of good fortune; and he became homesick.

Thereupon he produced a little censer, kindled a piece of charcoal and sprinkled the coal with aloes, gum incense and musk. Sitting on his heels with the censer between his small hands, he lowered his face toward the fumes, became drunk with sad memories. His tears hissed on the red coals and through a glittering film he saw the ancestral house, the blush of the clove trees, the deep-blue sea with the dhows slipping out toward Muscat. He dried his eyes, put everything away, concealed in his palm a tiny empty square vial of glass enameled with gold. He appeared in the corridor, calm, stately, giving a passing housemaid a look of scorn.

When all was silent, he entered Lilla's rooms.

Hamoud drew in through his expanded nostrils the unique fragrance of this place and trembled as he looked round him at the walls of French gray, the faintly orange hangings, all the charming objects that were so artfully arranged. He passed into her bedroom, stood pensive before the dressing-table whose mirrors were accustomed to reflect her, reached out to touch the handles of her brushes, as if expecting them to be still warm from her hands. He remembered the tiny empty vial at the same moment that he heard the car returning.

Lilla, on entering her bedroom, found the air heavier than usual with her perfume. It occurred to her that one of the servants must have been taking some; and she was vexed to think that a housemaid should go to meet a sweetheart wearing the fragrance that a Viennese expert in odors had concocted "to express her special temperament."

NOW and then, craving a glimpse of the gay streets and the shops, Lilla went into town "to see that everything was all right" in the house on lower Fifth Avenue, or else "to make sure that Parr was comfortable."

One afternoon, at a stoppage of the traffic, her limousine came side by side with that of Fanny Brassfield, who persuaded her to look in at the horse show.

She found herself in a box on the edge of an arena, amid a concourse of people whose unrelated movements and chatter combined in a species of visible and audible mist, which encircled the spread of tan-bark. In the midst of everything, in the dusty glitter that poured down from the high roof, horses and men were moving like automata. The thud of the hoofs was lost in a great buzzing of voices. The odor of stables was impregnated with the scent of winter flowers and sachets.

All around her Lilla could see the pretty women in their slate-gray and rust-colored cloaks, in their rakish little toques from under which their sophisticated eyes peeped out in search of homage. Some had the expression of those for whom love is an assured phenomenon solving all questions. Others seemed to be waiting impatiently for its advent or its departure. But all, Lilla thought, looked confident either of its persistence or its recurrence. Amid them she felt as isolate as a ghost.

Anna Zanidov, who had stepped down into the box, was looking at her intently.

"You do not often come to town, they tell me," the Russian murmured.

"No; why should I?" Lilla returned, as if violently aroused from sleep. She saw beyond Anna Zanidov on the steps of the box a man whose visage was lined across the forehead and under the cheek-bones and who showed, under his heavy mouse-colored mustaches, a stony, courteous smile. It was the new face of Cornelius Rysbröek.

"No; sit here," said the Russian. "I wish to talk with Fanny."

He seated himself beside Lilla, and, after watching a horse clear a jump, remarked,

"Do you know I'm living near you?"

He had taken a house in Westchester County, five miles away from hers. He had been looking for quiet because he was writing a book about his journey in China—"just for the fun of the thing."

"Yesterday," he added indifferently, "I happened to pass your gates. At least, I suppose they were. I had a mind to call."

His hands clasped round his knee attracted her unwilling notice. They had become sinewy, strongly masculine. He appeared like a hard-muscled elder brother of the listless hypochondriac who in the old days had paid feeble court to her; and strangeness enveloped him not only because of the changes in his body and character but also because of the hardships and escapes that he had experienced under the shadow of Tibet. Yet in this strangeness Lilla found a disturbingly familiar quality, like an echo of something lost, a vague and diminished reapparition of an old ideal.

"Yes," she said softly; "I wish we could be friends again. But the situation at home is so very delicate."

After a long silence he uttered, so low that she could hardly hear him,

"Are there no other places?"

"It's getting late," she faltered, wondering where she was going to find the strength to rise from her chair.

"Yes; go back to your tomb. Are there any mirrors in it? Do you ever look in them? Do you see in them what's happening to you? Your eyes are losing their luster; you're getting haggard, and in a little while one will see the bones under your skin. At this moment you look like the devil." Without raising his voice, without ceasing to stare as though bored at the old Russian silver box from which he was taking a cigaret with trembling fingers, he pronounced malignantly: "You are losing your beauty, Lilla—all that you ever had to plunge a man into hell. Presently, thank God, there will be nothing to love."

It seemed to her that he had shouted the words at the top of his voice, that the whole multitude must have heard him, and must have seen the look that he showed her for the briefest instant—the look of a damned soul peering through flames that only she could quench.

At the full impact of pity and remorse at last, she felt her spirit stumbling toward his through that inferno.

The promenaders perceived a woman and a man, expressionless, though rather worn and pale—perhaps from too many late festivities—exchanging apparently commonplace words while staring down at the horses.

"I'll 'phone you to-night——"

"Not the 'phone."

With an indolent movement he thrust his shaking hands into his coat pockets and tried again. "I'll drive over in the morning. You might be taking a walk——"

Weak and sick, she glanced down at the buttons of her gloves before rising to her feet. She heard Anna Zanidov saying to Fanny Brassfield: "Well, I've lost those friends of mine. No matter; I'll find a taxi." Pouncing upon this chance to escape, for the moment, from him and from herself, Lilla blurted out:

"Let me give you a lift. Come on."

Cornelius Rysbroek saw her lovely head turning away from him, the swirl of her cloak as she ascended the steps, the flash of her tapering boot-heel. He then stood looking round him through his ironical, weary mask, one hand on the back of a chair, however, as if without that support his quaking legs might let him fall to the floor.

THE limousine glided northward. A cold rain was falling. Behind the glistening window-panes the scene was continually melting from one blackness into another. At each flash of radiance Madame Zanidov was revealed motionless in her corner, muffled in her cloak, with closed eyes.

"Is she reading my thoughts?" Lilla wondered.

No matter. By this time the whole world must know them, released as they had been into that eager public air like a deafening cry of confession. "What's to be the end of this?" she asked herself, appalled, as she felt her life being whirled along from one fatal impulse to another, just as she was being whisked by the limousine from darkness to darkness. Ah, to check that inexorable progress; to see some constant light!

Anna Zanidov turned her wedge-shaped face toward Lilla with the words: "I have thought of you many times."

"I can say the same."

"To be sure," the Russian declared, "I have stopped doing that, you know. I didn't want to end by being shunned."

"I suppose you still have the gift."

"No doubt."

The limousine halted. Across its path rumbled a street-car mistily bright behind the rain, crowded with people who represented a rational humanity aloof from the little compartment in which were shut up these two victims of remarkable beliefs. Then, the limousine moving on, the blurred phantasmagoria closed in again, and the northern vista took on the ambiguity of Lilla's life, a compound of darknesses and deceptive gleams, stretching away toward—what? She uttered,

"Nevertheless, to know the future!" And as the Russian remained mute and motionless, she faltered, "No matter what one learned, the suspense would be over."

"Would it, indeed?"

"I am desperate," Lilla responded in low tones.

After a while, Madame Zanidov, with a compassionate austerity, responded,

"Remember, then, that it is you who wished this."

Their hands touched. In the rushing limousine, in this fluidity of lights and darkness, they were intent on the phenomenon that both believed to be a revelation of fate. At last the clairvoyant quietly began,

"I am out of doors, far away——"

The glare of passing headlights displayed her closed oblique eyes, her parted flat lips, her idol-like aspect, which bestowed on her the impressiveness, the seeming infallibility of those oracles that were anciently supposed to describe some future mood of the chaotic ebb and surge that human beings call life.

"Very old tree-trunks. Great trailing vines. Huge flowers black in the moonlight. It is the very same place. Here is that clearing, and the squatting black men. Their hands are folded; their heads are bowed forward; they are filled with sadness. Near them, on the ground, lies the dead man whose body is covered with a cloth. It is the man who has loved you." She dropped Lilla's hand, protesting, "This is incredible!"

"Incredible?"

"Yes; because this scene appears to be still in the future. Do you understand me? Hasn't happened yet."

The limousine stopped before the Russian's door as Lilla, disgusted by this anticlimax, replied:

"You have repeated your old prophecy because it has haunted my mind ever since you made it that night at the Brassfields'. You've merely got back from me the impression that you stamped on my consciousness then."

"Then that is something new. These perceptions of mine have never referred to the past. Besides, I had just now—but how shall I explain it?—a powerful sense of the future. Ah, well; maybe this gift of mine is leaving me, since I've refused to use it. I sha'n't be sorry." As she got out of the car, she amended, "At least, I don't think I'm sorry to have disappointed you."

The door snapped shut on that hope; the world became fluid again, and Lilla was borne away toward another pity and another remorse.

HAMOUD opened the front door and told her, "They are waiting for you."

"They? Who is here?"

"Mr. Brantome."

She stood for a moment staring balefully at the stone knight above the fireplace of the hall, who still raised his sightless face and brandished his blunt sword with that stupid appearance of defying everything. Then she tossed aside her cloak and hat and went straight into the living-room, peeling off her gloves, saying in a gracious voice:

"Hello! How nice! But how foolish to wait for me! You must both be starved."

"No; but David has been imagining all sorts of calamities," Brantome returned, with a loud artificial laugh and a look of anxiety in the depths of his old eyes. As for the invalid, silent in his wheel-chair before the Flemish tapestry, he showed her a frozen smile, a travesty of approval.

They went in to dinner. As soon as they had sat down, she began, with an unnatural vivacity, to tell them where she had been. That horse show! It had never seemed so silly to her. The same old stable-slang interspersed with the same old scandal.

David remained quite still, his frail shoulders bowed forward, his head advanced. She could not abate that frozen smile of his.

"Why don't you eat your dinner?" she asked him.

"I am interested," he replied rather hoarsely.

"At what? I was wondering what right I had to inflict all that on you. I suppose when I came in you were talking of something worth while." She turned again to Brantome. "And 'Marco Polo'?"

"The best tone-poem since 'Don Quixote,'" he said, rising and making her a bow. "As far as it has gone. It is not finished yet."

"It soon will be. Won't it, David?"

"Oh, another month, with luck," he returned lightly, trying to lift a wine-glass and spilling on the cloth the champagne that had been prescribed by Dr. Fallows.

She caught his wrist. A pang passed through her heart. She showed them a new expression, or else an old one for which they had been hoping, as she exclaimed in alarm,

"You're not so well to-night!"

And, as Hamoud was wheeling David into the living-room, she protested to Brantome, "I can't leave him for a day without something happening."

"Then for God's sake don't—at least till this piece is done." He pulled her back and whispered: "Why, this afternoon he was nearly beside himself. How can he work——"

"About what?" she ejaculated, glancing down at his hand on her arm.

"How should I know, if you don't?"

In the living-room, Brantome did not sit down. Flushed from the wine that he had drunk, striding to and fro, he began a rigmarole about "David's future"—about "Marco Polo." They hardly recognized him. The old leonine fellow was transfigured, as though by megalomania. He seemed larger, and slowly made the gestures of an emperor.

"And do you think I'm going to let it be produced the first time in the usual way—

in the style that's always the fate of new works by young men? Between two pieces by moderns unknown in this country, so that every one is suspicious before a note is heard? Or by some ass who comes on with a deprecating air, an effect of washing his hands of all responsibility—who conducts the thing like an apologetic metronome, is harboring a lot of benighted second violins, hasn't half rehearsed it, and thinks to get by with some boisterous fortissimos? Let me tell you whoever plays it first will have the fear of the Lord in his heart. And of me, Brantome!"

He darted into the study as Lilla said to David:

"The piece will stand up for itself, I think. He's becoming too ridiculous."

BUT in the other room Brantome began beating out fragments of "Marco Polo." The familiar sounds took on a startling majesty in the atmosphere heavily charged with the player's exultation. One had an illusion that this music was irradiating from the house all over the earth. Then, in the silence, the rustle of the rain seemed a long murmur of enthusiastic comment.

Abruptly Brantome reappeared in the doorway with his mane disheveled, like a lion let out of a cage; but Lilla was too wretched to laugh at him. Now he was bursting with memories of those, since great, with whom he had chummed in his youth, when he, too, had expected to be great. He swept his listeners away to foreign studios, where they saw young men poising for flights amid the stars.

"And here," he affirmed, whirling round to Lilla, "is something better in humor, in tragedy, in dignity, in richness of invention, in everything."

"I know it," she responded, reaching out to lay her hand upon David's hand.

"Something better," he repeated, in a changed voice, with an effect of shrinking to his usual proportions. His arm fell to his side, and he turned away to hide his altered look. "I'll fight for this boy," he said. "I'll fight the whole world for him."

"You looked," suggested Lilla gently, "as if you were going to fight me, too."

"You? No; you are my ally. Or, if you please, I am yours; for neither of us can do anything without you."

At midnight, when Lilla returned to the doorway of his bedroom, David was not asleep.

She sat down on the edge of the bed. A beam of light from the corridor touched her slender figure wrapped in yellow silk and her braided hair outlined round her head by a narrow golden halo. The rain had ceased, and the breeze from the window was laden with the odor of the saturated earth. Falteringly he asked her if she was chilly.

She was surprised, having been aware for a long while only of this pity and this remorse.

"You have suffered to-day," she said.

He responded, "The penalty one pays for having acquired great riches is the fear of losing them."

She was silent for a time, then murmured:

"When this piece is finished, or to-morrow if you like, we might go abroad. Over there we could find any number of nice secluded places. Would some Greek island please you? The climate is very invigorating."

"Would you like it?"

"If it would make you happier."

He uttered a groan. "How I torment you! It must be some devil in me that prompts me to this ingratitude. All that you've done for me, and I'm not satisfied! You are perfection."

She laughed dismally, raising her face in the gloom of the bed-canopy that enshrouded them like the shadows of a catafalque. Perfection! A sorry heroine, an unstable creature, tossed about from one compassion to another, from a contemptible dissatisfaction here to a half-hypocritical idea of reparation there, and now to self-abasement! She was sick from disgust at her ingratitude to this poor invalid, through whom she had become majestic, holding fate back so that beauty, and even life, might miraculously survive. She seemed to have emerged from an ignoble dream; she longed to merit again, at least in her devotion to this supine figure, that word "perfection." Suddenly her bosom swelled, not only with compunction but with love also—a love perhaps in some ways stronger than any other, a maternal passion, since it was she, indeed, who had recreated him, and since without the nourishment of her daily reassurances he must die.

"Help me to deserve those words," she besought him, bending down through the shadows. Her tears moistened his lips, and upon that revelation he stammered,

"At this moment I feel that you're mine."

"Not only this moment. Forever!"

IN THE morning, when Brantome had departed for the city, Lilla said to Hamoud, "Please tell the servants that if any one should ask for me I'm not at home."

Soon afterward, while David was at work shut up in the study and Lilla was trying to read a book in the living-room, the door-bell rang. When she heard Hamoud, in the hall, speaking quickly in Arabic, her body relaxed. She thought:

"He has found one of his own people. I am glad. He must have been so lonely all this while."

She heard another voice, deeper and more vibrant. "Yes, Arabic," she said, smiling contentedly. Of a sudden, for some inexplicable reason, she felt as if she were going to faint.

She raised her eyes from the book and saw a tall man with a black beard standing in the hall doorway, watching her.

She was seized with the paralyzing chill that comes to those who seem to be confronted by apparitions of the dead. Her conviction that she saw no living man was strengthened by his physical alteration. His black beard, which covered even his cheek-bones, masked a shriveled countenance. His eyes had receded into their sockets; his lips were stretched over his teeth, and the swarthiness of his skin had become sulphurous. The stillness of his attitude and his blank, attentive look completed the effect of unreality.

Then she thought, "Perhaps it's I who am dead." Her surroundings melted away. All her obligations related to these surroundings melted also. She began to float toward him, over the floor that she no longer felt beneath her feet, so that her disembodied spirit might be merged with this other spirit. Her half-raised hands prepared to cling to him—as though one phantom could cling fast to another! But abruptly an inivisble force seemed to check her progress midway, and she stood before him with her arms, that had meant to embrace him, lifted in what appeared to be a frozen gesture of horrified denial.

There was no change in his face, disfigured by unhappiness and illness.

The air round them began to tremble with strains of music—harmonies mounting up toward a climax of intolerable beauty. It came, this perfect epitome of love, from behind the closed doors of the study, where David Verne was playing as never before.

"Lilla!"

A profound silence followed the call that neither of these two had uttered. And from behind the closed doors David, transported by his exultation, cried out again to the Muse: "Lilla! Lilla!"

Swaying aside, she sank down into a chair. As she sat there, a huddle of coffee-colored fabric and pallid flesh, the sunlight burst through the clouds to smite her all over with its glory, igniting her hair, turning her face into incandescent gold.

Lawrence Teck watched this transfiguration.

He forgot his sardonic, slight purpose in coming here. He became natural—ready to fight for this woman, though still believing that he despised everything about her except her loveliness. All at once he was like a man who stands on the edge of a chasm, who has an idea that he may be able to leap across, from a bitterness endured alone to a bitterness shared with another. He took the leap. He put her to the test.

She saw him walking across the living-room toward the closed doors of the study.

Noiselessly, as swift as her dreadful thought, she rose, traversed the room, passed him, and whirled round against the door. She flung out her arms in a movement that nailed her against the panels as one might be nailed to a cross. She could not speak; but he read on her lips, as if she had cried it in his face, "No!"

The music began again, at first soft and simply melodious, soon complex and thunderous. The door at her back vibrated from the sound, and the quivering penetrated her body and her brain. The whole room reverberated from this triumph of involuntary pity. And again that voice exulting in the study:

"Lilla! Oh, where are you? Don't you hear the strength in my hands? As if I were getting well——"

"Come away from here," she muttered, giving Lawrence an awful stare, snatching at his sleeve, dragging him after her across the room, her feet as heavy as if she were fleeing through a nightmare. Now, straining at his arm, she was in the wainscoted hall before the stone mantelpiece that bore up the defiant knight. Now she reached the fernery. The palms leaped back into place behind them as she collapsed upon the red cushions of the settee.

He stood watching her as before, erect, breathing, alive, even though he lay smashed in the depths of that chasm which she had prevented him from leaping.

"AND your idea is," Lawrence inquired calmly, "that he mustn't know at all?" She continued to weep in silence. He added, "I merely mean, is it practicable?"

Incoherently she started to tell the whole story over again.

"But how can I make you understand? My wits are gone. He was utterly helpless, done for; you might as well say dead. All the life blazing and throbbing round him—and round me, too; for I was as good as dead also. Two dead people meeting and trying to find their way back, through each other, to some sort of life. But he didn't know that he was helping me; that is my secret. Yet it wasn't all selfishness with me. In the end I was persuaded just by pity. Have you seen a sick animal looking at you pleadingly? Pity is a monster. First one tentacle, then another, and finally one is pulled under and devoured. One should never feel pity. But you were gone."

She pressed her fingers to her temples and closed her eyes.

"Don't you know this will kill him?" she asked. "But how could you know that? It's so, all the same. It's just I who have kept him alive. Ah! This is too much! What am I to do?"

She writhed amid the red cushions of the settee till he commanded sternly:

"Calm yourself. It's time we began to talk sensibly, you and I."

She sat still, looking at him in terror.

"Yes," she whispered abjectly.

His erect immobility, his emotional self-containment recalled to her, by contrast, the feebleness and helplessness that had lured her into this trap. Once more she perceived in this man the refuge that her frailty of nerves and tissues had always yearned for; and the miracle that she had accomplished in his absence became the work of a stranger. Ah, to let go of heroism now, to be once more her true self—the fragile complement of this strength! But in the very moment when she visualized the consummation of that wish, she saw with her mind's eye the other sitting at the piano in his wheel-chair, his music strewn round him, the air still vibrant with triumph and gratitude, his face turned eagerly toward the door as toward the source of an infallible reassurance, of beautiful accomplishment, of life itself.

The palms, forming an arch above him, cast a greenish shadow over his bearded visage, which was sunken and yellow from the last attack of fever in the coast town. This head of his, hovering before her in a frame of ragged greenery, seemed about to melt away amid one of her old illusions of the jungle. Gradually she understood that this was not he whom she had married on that night of romance.

All those thoughts of his were what had changed his face into this new appearance, hard and misunderstanding, incredulous and ironical, and crushed with an utter weariness of spirit. And Lilla did not know how to summon back into being the man that he had been, for all her inspiration was dragged down by guilt. She remembered the dusty rooms where even her last tribute of flowers had now turned to dust. She recalled the victorious seductiveness of genius, of egotism, the lure of a world in which a myriad of women had seemed to be dancing away from her toward happiness. She quailed as she heard again her vow to Lawrence on their wedding-night, "Forever!" and that word was blended with the other "Forever!" which, a few hours ago, she had uttered in the gloom of David's bedroom.

He felt her sense of guilt and misinterpreted it. When her protestations became more intimate, a smile, half contemptuous and half commiserating, appeared on his shrunken lips. It struck her silent.

"As I understand it," said Lawrence Teck, "this is your plan, which seems to me, in the light of common sense, perfectly hopeless. In short, he's not to know. You've refused to let me face him——"

"Ah, yes," she sighed, and quoted: "'Infirm of purpose, give me the daggers.' You'd kill him for me, wouldn't you?"

"You exaggerate. If he were as delicately poised as that, I shouldn't want his death on my hands. These people who kill one another, and even themselves, for love exist, of course; but to me they're ridiculous.

The game isn't worth it. There are too many other things in life. As for me, my work, that part of it out there unfinished, dropped so that I could run back here and clear this matter up——"

"No; I'm the one that you're killing," she returned, bowing her head.

He went on in a deliberate, grave tone, feeling logical and dizzy, replete with self-justification, magnanimity and horror:

"I managed to arrive in this country secretly. There are only three persons in New York who know that I'm here, or, for that matter, alive. It may help a little if I succeed in slipping away as quietly as I came. You can get your divorce on grounds of desertion. I'm sorry enough to have let you in for this. It's my fault from beginning to end. I shouldn't have appeared then, and, worst of all, I shouldn't have reappeared now." He hesitated; then, glancing toward the door of the fernery: "No doubt you'll discover how to smooth it out with him. After all, if he were the most sensitive creature on earth, he ought to be satisfied when he understands that, though I've popped up alive, he is the one you've chosen."

"You are mad!" she gasped, giving a convulsive bound amid the red cushions.

He wondered if it were so.

Here she was before his eyes, more beautiful than in any of his dreams, a diffuse vision compressed once more into a tangible form, fragrant and warm, full of coursing blood and tremors, no doubt still capable of those same ecstatic appearances and vocal rhapsodies. All his swarming jealous thoughts were consuming him as warrior-ants might consume some wretched victim of King Muene-Motapa. He felt that this deliberate farce must end, that he must spring through the door, find the other, kill him with one blow, and then rush far away from this woman who, like a fallen goddess, lay weeping again, her face between her arms, somehow pathetic under this retribution for the inconstancy that she pretended was pity.

She raised her face and pronounced: "God can't be as cruel as this. There must be some way. But I can't think any more."

"There are two ways. One is for me to go. The other is to tell him."

She sat up and clutched the cushions on each side of her.

"You ask me to go into that room, and you might as well say shoot him through the heart!"

He said to himself: "How she sticks to it! This pretense is all she has to cling to, poor thing, in lieu of saying straight out: 'I can't return to that old adventure now. Too much time has intervened; I'm no longer the same woman. I must stick to this new romance.' " He said to himself, "I shall get away from here this moment." He turned toward the doorway.

"Remember," he told her wearily, "I'm depending on your silence."

Struck by the folly of that caution, he hurried into the hall, as though to escape an outburst of laughter.

He was close to the front door when she appeared in his path.

"Wait outside. I'll go with you."

She stood tearing her handkerchief to pieces, looking at him strangely out of her swollen eyes. She went on:

"Why, we must talk. We can surely find the way out. But not here. At the rooms. The same rooms—" A film passed over her eyes. She caught him fast round the neck, raised her lips toward his, and whispered, with a distracted appearance that seemed guilty as well as passionate: "You still love me! As much as ever!"

He felt that he and she had reached the depths. This temptation capping the climax of her rejection—this monstrous inversion of the classic triangle! "What is she, then," he asked himself, "and what am I?" For he caught hold of her as if he were going to crush her doubly perfidious, inexplicable heart, and fastened his lips to hers before he thrust her from him with a gesture meant to express all his loathing of her, of himself, of the whole of life.

"Oh, wait!" she cried, as he fumbled with the door.

To hold her off, with the first words that came into his head, he cast at her,

"To-morrow!"

She remained facing the closed door, softly repeating,

"To-morrow."

CORNELIUS RYSBROEK had just driven up before the house in a blue runabout. Now, sunk down behind the steering-wheel, he gaped at the black-bearded man who stood like a rock at the foot of a low flight of steps.

Lawrence Teck put on his hat, gave Cornelius Rysbroek a blind stare, climbed into a hired car. In doing so, he showed his aquiline profile; and then Cornelius recalled the moonlit terrace of the Brassfields' country house.

"It's he!"

The hired car set out for New York, and behind it, all the way, went the blue runabout.

SHE entered her sitting-room, locked the door, threw herself upon the couch. Round lunch-time there came a creaking in the corridor, a knock. It was David in his wheel-chair, propelled by Hamoud.

"No lunch. And perhaps no dinner. It's only a headache, dear. I shall be all right."

"Your voice sounds——"

"Why not, since I'm suffering a little?"

The creaking sound died away.

At the first glimmer of dawn she was up. An hour later she entered David's bedroom, dressed, hatted and gloved. Her skin appeared translucent. Her hands, drawing her cloak round her shivering body, seemed almost too weak for that task. She wore her perfume.

"Why, where are you going?"

"To town. It seems that Parr has fallen ill."

She leaned over him quickly, thinking of all the kisses of betrayal that had ever been bestowed upon the unaware. She went out, leaving him dumfounded by her appearance of feverish eagerness, energy and sickness.

On the ride to New York she lay back in the corner of the limousine, her face burning, her lips pressed together. "He thinks I don't love him, it seems!" That was the tender menace she hurled ahead of her as the car carried her swiftly, yet how slowly, toward his rooms.

She remembered Anna Zanidov.

"The infallible clairvoyant! All that solemn nonsense! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

She found herself at the door of his rooms, ringing, knocking, calling his name through the panels. She recollected that she had the key in her purse. The door swung back with a bang, and she ran through the shaded apartment that was filled with the dull gleaming of weapons. She stopped before the bed that had not been slept in. She returned to the living-room, and gazed at the withered petals lying round the gourd.

The doorway framed an undersized, obese old man who wore a skull-cap of black silesia. He was the janitor.

"Where is Mr. Teck?"

"Mr. Teck?" the janitor exclaimed in a shocked voice.

The words tumbled out of her mouth:

"He was here yesterday, surely. Didn't he leave any word?"

"Mr. Lawrence Teck?" the old fellow repeated in consternation.

Behind him hesitated, in passing by, a young man with an inquisitive face, who had under his arm a leather portfolio. She slammed the door on them. In the shadowy room the very walls seemed to be crumbling.

She searched everywhere for a note, for some sign that he had been here, but there was no object in the place not covered with dust.

Then, sunk in a stupor, she drove to the little house in Greenwich Village. Her ring was answered by Parr's niece, the woman with the sleek bandeaux. Mr. Teck had been here twice, the second time late last night. On that occasion he had taken Parr away with him.

"Where to?"

"Ah, ma'am, if only I knew!"

Those faded, medieval eyes gazed at the benefactress in a sudden understanding and intimacy, and Lilla thought, "You, too, perhaps, in some region far removed from your pots and pans, have had such a moment as this!" And she would have liked to let her face fall forward upon the bosom of that threadbare working-dress, feel those toil-worn arms close round her, and utter the plea: "Tell me how to bear such things, to survive, to emerge into that strange serenity of yours."

She drove to Brantome's. The whole world was now tumbling down about her ears.

Brantome rose from his desk, where perhaps he had been sketching out some brilliant appreciation of "Marco Polo." After one glance at Lilla,

"What's happened?"

She showed him a look of hatred that embraced the whole room; for it was not only he but also this abode of his that had entrapped her. In accents that lashed him like whips, she told him everything.

He sat down with a thump and let his ruined face droop forward. She heard the hoarse rumble:

"What shall I do now?"

"Find him!"

She returned to the house in the country.

In the middle of the third night, the telephone beside her pillow gave a buzz, more terrifying than a shout of fire, an earthquake, a knife at the throat. Brantome was speaking. Parr had returned to the house in Greenwich Village. Lawrence Teck had sailed secretly that day for Africa.

She replaced the receiver on the hook, rested her head on her hands, and remained thus for a long while. In the end she formed the words: "That woman."

She was thinking of "the infallible clairvoyant."

IN THE early morning, while the trees round the house were still full of mist, Lilla, in her sitting-room at the tall Venetian desk of green-and-gold lacquer, redrafted for the twentieth time the message that she wanted to send after Lawrence Teck by wireless. The rich scintillations from the polished surfaces before her enveloped her distracted countenance in a new greenish pallor as she traced, now heavily, now very faintly, the words:

"If you knew what you've done——"

She paused; for the confusion of her brain made her think of a squirrel frantically racing in a revolving cage. Then, seeing nothing except the pen-point, she wrote slowly: "What have you done? What have you done?" And suddenly, in a convulsive hand that sprawled over half the page, "To fly over the sea!" She stared at these words in amazement.

Hamoud-bin-Said entered the sitting-room.

He had on the dark-blue joho edged with a red pattern. His snowy underrobe was bound with a blue-and-red sash from which protruded the silver hilt of his dagger. His tan-colored, clear-cut, delicately bearded face was expressionless as he said softly,

"The morning paper."

And she realized that the whole story had been discovered, scattered broadcast.

For a time Hamoud regarded the prostration of her spirit from the heights of fatalism. But presently, as he contemplated that limp pose, which added one more novelty to her innumerable beautiful appearances, the stoicism that had made him look mature gave way to the fervor of youth—his limpid eyes turned to fire; his full, precisely chiseled lips were distorted by a pang. However, he appeared as before when she raised her head and uttered,

"Burn it."

His reverie had a flavor of commiseration now, as though he were saying to himself: "Who can catch all the leaves before they fall to the ground? Who can sweep back the waves of the sea?" He responded:

"The men who make these things have been telephoning half the night. And now they are here themselves."

"Here?"

"They are sitting on the steps," he affirmed, lost in a gloomy, relishing consideration of the wonders of life. "They wish to talk to you and to Mr. Verne."

He pronounced these words as if he had no idea of their enormity.

Her spirit stirred at this threat. All seemed lost except the phenomenon of David living, by which, in her distraction, she hoped somehow to justify herself. To the amazement of the world one might oppose the fact of genius miraculously unfolding through her sacrifice. But she thought: "The world! What is that?" And thereupon, "All the same, it shall not strike down that helpless creature." And the world became a monster, unfeeling, indeed, immeasurably malign, lying far off with the teeming cells of its brain all plotting to rob her of her wretched victory and with the claws of one outstretched paw already touching the threshold of this house.

"You are to drive them away."

She went on groping for phrases as one gropes for objects in the dark, telling Hamoud that henceforth nobody from outside the house was to see David till she had been informed, that all newspapers and letters must come first to her, that the servants must not show by so much as a look—She became aware that among these phrases she was uttering, with an air of calm consideration, others that had no intelligible meaning, no relation to her objective thoughts. She heard herself say: "Perhaps I had better see the servants myself. It would be a queer thing if there were a draft from the pantry. There is a red pillow in the fernery; it must be hidden— The spears, too—" She gazed in perplexity at Hamoud, who appeared to be floating before her at the end of a dark tunnel.

"For how long?" he sighed.

"For how long?" she repeated plaintively.

He seemed to grow taller. His face, which had taken on a blank aspect, resembled the faces of those who, in Oriental tales, stand waiting to fulfil a wish too sinister to have become an audible command. In that instant she saw all problems rushing to their solution except one problem, all treasures recaptured except the peace of conscience. She struggled as one might to awake from some hypnotic spell in which one had been assailed with frightful suggestions. She sprang up and transfixed him with a look.

"Go! Do as I say!"

He bowed and departed.

At once she became so weary that she could hardly reach her couch.

"What am I to do?" she asked herself in a lost voice.

Somewhere, no doubt, there was another Lilla, sane, able to act as well as to think, capable of solving even this dilemma. But that other Lilla remained far away, perhaps in the realm of those who, with an Alexandrian gesture, ruthlessly cut the knot of interwoven scruples, and for a brief season triumphed over the accidents of life. Raising her eyes in despair, she saw trembling on the ceiling a ray of light that resembled the blade of a spear.

There descended upon her the full weight of her forebodings—the superstitious dread that was typical of her emotional defectiveness, and that had its origin, perhaps, in those two unhappy persons who had been her parents. Yet when she moaned, "Ah, Anna Zanidov!" it was with an accent of reproach as keen as though the prophetess of a tragedy must be the cause of it.

The sunshine was dissolving the luxurious room. There came to her, like a dullness from a drug, the fancy that this world had no existence except that with which her credulity had endowed it. "All my life I have been dreaming this dream in which Lawrence and David, Hamoud and Anna Zanidov, America and Africa are figments. Presently I shall wake and wonder why all these figments gave me so much pain."

She floated deliciously in this thought as though in a tepid sea. She reflected, with a vague smile, 'I must go and restore the appearance of happiness to that poor phantom down-stairs."

LILLA descended the staircase in the transplendency of the many-colored window-panes. The red of rubies, the blue of sapphires, the green of emeralds enwrapped her slim body that was still phenomenally moving in its habitual harmoniousness. The serene progress of her person through prismatic light, the smile that passed unchanged through rays of varying resplendence added another stanza to the poetry of flesh, a stanza differing from all the rest, however, in its subtle, maybe ominous quality of strangeness. For now, bathed in the fortuitous magnificence of the stained glass, she shone in herself with an unearthly bloom, as if an abnormality that had always permeated her seductiveness were now at its apogee—as if, with no one to witness, she had reached the utter expression of her loveliness, which blazed forth for one instant completely, before dissolving in this strange element that mingled with it.

The multicolored lights released her. A pale, cold atmosphere closed round her as she traversed the sunless hall and living-room. Beyond the doorway of the study this cold pallor rested on the figure in the wheel-chair—the phantom because of which that other phantom was traveling toward an exotic semblance of death. He had not heard her footsteps. He remained with his head bowed forward, a prey, no doubt, to such anxiety as ghosts experience. He expressed perfectly that helplessness with which, when she had believed him to be real, he had laid hold of her pity.

The outlines of all objects round her were clear and hard; everything had assumed a look of preternatural density. She stood paralyzed by the thought: "It is not illusion. It is reality."

He was looking at her.

What appearance did she present? What did he read in her face? Had he, too, heard the command that seemed to have been shouted in her ears: "Tell him! Strike and be free!"

"What is it?" he whispered.

Her lips parted, writhed, and uttered no sound. She was struck dumb, no doubt by the feeling that if she spoke she would blurt out everything in obedience to that atrocious command.

All at once she seemed to have flames in her eyes. Everything had turned the color of gold. She stood with her head thrown back, her face changed by anguish; then she fled through that golden dazzle. On the staircase the many-colored rays reached out to hold her, to restore her to that exquisite transfiguration; she passed through them in a flash; and indeed they could now have enhanced, instead of beauty, only the triumph of that element which had made her beauty strange. She stretched herself upon her couch, on her back, in the attitude of the dead. She found her voice, and pronounced with an extreme rapidity, in muffled tones:

"I am on the ship— Faster! Faster!"

She uttered a cry that was heard all over the house.

When Hamoud and the servants came running, they found her rigid, with an aspect of catalepsy; but while they were telephoning for the nearest physician the convulsions began. Tossing about, she showed intense fear of all who tried to approach her. The women ran from the room. Hamoud remained, rigid at the foot of the bed, his face a dingy white, staring before him as one who meditates on some immense intolerable injury. When her cries burst forth, he laid his hand upon his dagger, as if against these invisible forces, these jinn from the Pit, that had taken possession of her.

The physician arrived to find the convulsions ended.

Hamoud, now gripping his dagger as if he would presently escape this scene by plunging the blade into his breast, uttered,

"Dying?"

"It will pass," the physician answered, with a movement of reproof.

Hamoud approached, afflicted by disbelief, by a despair that swept away his fatalism, by a fury that called for revenge. He bared his teeth and demanded:

"I shall bring him? We show her to him?"

"Who?"

Hamoud glanced malignantly toward the floor.

"Well, hardly!"

The physician resumed his air of preoccupation, of mournful exultation. He said to himself, "I had given up hope of ever seeing one; but here it is at last, exact in every detail—a perfect case of the *grande hystérie.*" And presently he went to telephone for a famous specialist in psychotherapy. She had descended into a stupor that was to last for days.

THERE was a hush over the house amid the old trees. The servants moved softly through the corridors, paused to whisper to one another, then hurried out of sight as David Verne appeared in his wheel-chair, slowly propelled toward the sick-room by Hamoud.

She seemed hardly to breathe as she lay in the gloom through which drifted the white uniforms of the nurses, amid a dim glamour from all the charming objects that had been meant to please her senses. Her hair was spread out on the pillow to frame her colorless face, which had now attained indeed the look of the "angelic messenger." But the angelic messenger, the bearer of life to him, seemed to David on the point of returning to the source of life.

He sat at the bedside, sometimes unable to extend his hand to touch her hand, as though his strength were wholly a reflection of her strength, so that with the latter's waning the former must flicker out.

"What is it?" he thought, lost in misery and wonder.

The physicians and the nurse looked at him askance, their secret pent in behind their lips.

He felt round him the pressure of this secret. The air was full of thoughts that he could not apprehend. He was like a man fettered in the dark, hearing all about him the movements of unfettered persons who, with an abnormal faculty for seeing, communicated to one another a wealth of knowledge by the expressiveness of their invisible glances. Behind the benignant evasiveness of the doctors he seemed to discern a fact like a thunderbolt withheld. He recoiled from his conjectures, to cower amid these shadows which he felt might be less agonizing than that flash of light.

There was no reason for alarm, they told him. And instead of being mysterious, it was a perfectly defined case of nerves, hysteria, emotional collapse.

Ah, yes; but from what cause?

Even Hamoud, he was sure, knew something that he did not know. The Arab, while apparently as solicitous as ever, was changed. He had taken on merely in his physical aspect a new, almost ominous quality; he seemed taller than formerly, and older. Amid all his tasks he moved with a sort of feline restlessness. He took to prowling at night round and round the bleak garden. The robed figure paced the paths with an effect of stealing carefully toward an enemy. In the light from a window his fine profile appeared for an instant like a presentment of vengeance, with something sensual in its look of cruelty.

Now and then, in the middle of the night, David became aware that Hamoud had entered the room without a sound, to watch him from the deepest mass of shadows. One could make out only the pale blotch that was his white skull-cap, the long pale streak that was the uncovered portion of his white underrobe. The eyes, the expression of the face were lost in blackness.

"I thought you called."

And he was gone.

In his own room, having noiselessly closed and locked the door, he drew from his bosom the Koran. Holding the book reverently in his small right hand, he raised his head and stood waiting with closed eyes for inspiration. Presently, opening the Koran, he read,

"The doom of God cometh to pass."

This text was the answer to his prayer for guidance.

He seated himself by the window and gazed out into the darkness. He considered piously the wonders of terrestial life, a succession of accidents all foreordained by God, an apparent drifting that was in fact one steady propulsion by the hand of Fate. From the rich ancestral house of coraline limestone across the sea to strange lands. From dignity to abasement. From loneliness to this faint, delicious fragrance in which the heart dissolved. From a dream of freedom to the service of love through the agency of death.

IT WAS twilight. David Verne sat in the study, his chin on his breast. Hamoud, appearing in the doorway, gazed round the room. He had a folded newspaper in his hand.

He looked carefully at the fireplace, where logs were piled ready for lighting over a heap of brushwood and crumpled wrapping-paper. Then he regarded the center-table, on which stood the Venetian goblet, the carafe and the bottle filled with the medicine prescribed by Dr. Fallows. In the expiring daylight, Hamoud, motionless in his robes, loomed paler than usual, his handsome face very grave.

The piano attracted his attention. In the shadows it had the aspect of a squatting monster that bared at him the teeth of its wide mouth. As if he had been awaiting this grotesque effect of challenge, he moved toward the hazy windows and began to curtain them.

David murmured listlessly,

"Has the doctor gone?"

Hamoud gave a slight start. With his hand on the last window-curtain, he inclined his head, listening in awe to the tremor of that voice. When he had passed his tongue over his lips, he responded,

"Not yet."

He drew the last curtain slowly. As he did so, his visage, sharpened by the dying light, was turned toward David; his gemlike lips, without parting, seemed to say: "Look! It is the world of sky and trees, of sunrise and moon, sunset and night that I am shutting out."

The study lay in darkness.

Through this darkness Hamoud moved silently toward the center-table. He tweaked the lamp-cord; a gush of mellow rays leaped out to cover the scattered piles of manuscript, the Venetian goblet, the bottle of medicine. Hamoud moved the wheel-chair closer to these objects, so that David, by reaching forth his hand, might touch them if he wished. Then, after stepping back to consider this arrangement with a queer, strained look, he went to the fireplace, lighted a match, blew it out, and laid it on the hearth. David stared at him.

"You have not lighted the fire. It is cold to-night."

Again Hamoud listened in awe to the sound of that voice.

"It is cold," he assented softly, with a shiver.

Still kneeling on the hearth, he contemplated the other as though he were seeing him now for the first time. The feeble, romantic face before him was not as pallid as his face; those enlarged, questioning eyes were not as strange as his eyes. At that stare of undefined alarm he felt, despite all his jealousy, contempt and hatred, a twinge of weakness; he remembered all those other helpless attitudes that he had sustained and eased. Of a sudden, the habit of protection grappled with his resolve, and might have conquered, for a time at any rate, had he not recalled the sufferings of the beloved.

He rose and approached the wheel-chair. The newspaper was in his left hand, half concealed, like a weapon, in the folds of his robe.

He heard a feeble cry: "What has happened? What has happened?"

"And I who have eaten his bread," thought Hamoud, in sudden shame and horror.

If only some one would come! But the shadowy perspective of the living-room remained empty; and there was nowhere any sound except the beating of his heart.

"Have not taken any of this?" he pronounced in a tone of suffocation. "Remember—must never take it until Hamoud has dropped it. Fifteen drops. No more——"

He set down the bottle. It fell upon its side. But, alas, it did not break.

"Hamoud! What has happened?"

"Have mercy!" a voice called in his ear; so in mercy, with a violent gesture, with a sensation of sickness, he thrust the newspaper into David's hands. "Done! No chance to turn back now!" He rolled the folding doors together behind him and leaned against them, his face beaded with sweat, panting as if in escaping that room he had run a mile. He listened. How his heart thumped! He heard nothing. "Has he the courage, though? Alone with those thoughts! And after all—" Leaning against the door, through which came never a sound, Hamoud began to weep—for the man whom he had served, for her, and for himself.

Yes; the Omân stock, cruel and remorseless in its pristine state, had deteriorated in the lax paradise of Zanzibar. The old impulses were there, but in abortive form; and the deed that Hamoud's forefathers would have done less indirectly and without a twinge roused in Hamoud that pity which an ironist has called "the mask of weakness."

Next morning, when they asked him to state his whole knowledge of the matter, he told them that, as he had been about to light the fire, Mr. Verne had seen, amid the brushwood, a bit of newspaper showing his name in large type. It was there, no doubt, in consequence of the servants' carelessness.

"But you gave it to him," the local chief of police remarked severely.

"Before I knew."

Their indignation was softened by his crushed mien and by his swollen eyes. Having arrived at their verdict, they discussed Arabs—or, as they called them, "Ayrabs"—and one honest old fellow even paid the race a compliment in saying,

"It's said that when they like a person they will do anything for them."

It was Hamoud who told her.

The nurse, stealing a nap on the couch in the sitting-room, did not stir as he passed into the bedchamber; but Lilla awoke at the command of his eyes. When he had finished speaking, the tremor of his voice persisted like the echo of a bell that concludes some sacrament.

"No!" she sighed, as the world burst into fragments, and, like the bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope, slid swiftly into a new pattern. "Ah, the poor soul! The poor soul!" She saw him more clearly; she understood him far better, than in life. "All for nothing! All for nothing!" No—surely not all for nothing.

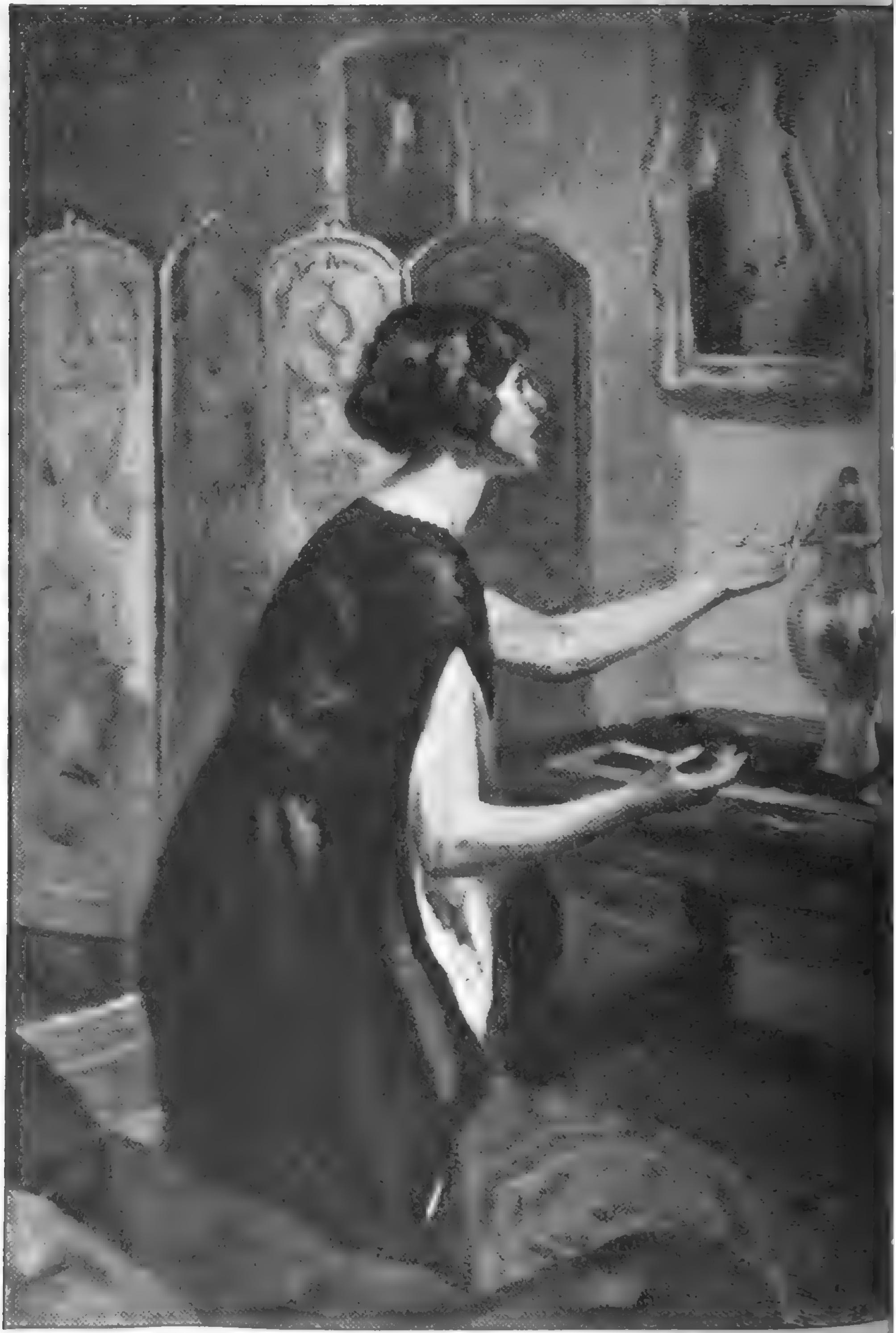
At any rate, these were tears of convalescence.

A FORTNIGHT later, as she sat in a deep chair in the living-room, Hamoud presented himself in the doorway to announce,

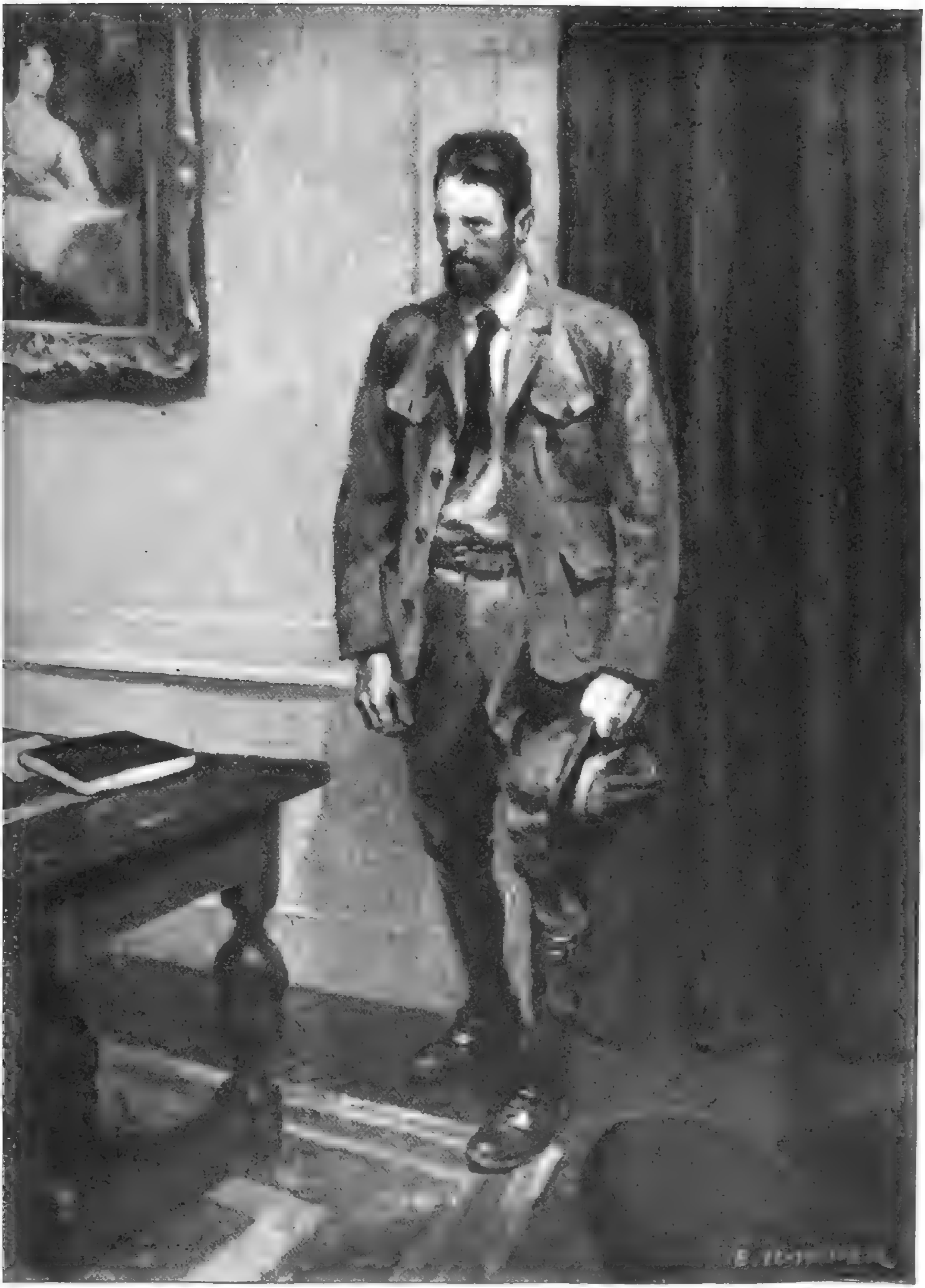
"He is here."

Parr crept into her presence.

The grizzle-haired fellow advanced a few steps, limping on his cane, then halted, frightened by this thin, white-faced woman who, her chin in her cupped hand, sat staring at him with the cold eyes of a queen about to condemn a malefactor to death. She was wrapped in a negligée of peach-colored silk from the flowing sleeves of which long tassels trailed on the rug. The morning light, as though lured from all other objects in the room by this motionless fine figure, accentuated her appearance of iciness. She spoke, too, in the voice of a stranger, in accents that thrilled with a



Lilla began to float toward him, over the floor that she no longer felt beneath her feet, so that her disembo
midway, and she stood before him with her arms



rit might be merged with this other spirit. But abruptly an invisible force seemed to check her progress what appeared to be a frozen gesture of horrified denial.

force produced incongruously from so emaciated a body.

"Come closer. I want to look at you."

He resumed his tremulous advance, very slowly, because so heavily burdened by his loyalty to the beloved master, his treason to this once-gentle benefactress. Casting down his eyes, he stood before her abjectly leaning on his cane. His honest, deeply lined face twitched painfully; for he could feel her scorn passing over him like a winter blast. He faltered:

"I was helpless, ma'am. I only did as he ordered. He thought it best. He believed it wouldn't leak out. We took all precautions." He told her how Lawtence Teck had taken him from the Greenwich Village house to an obscure hotel, where they had found a strange gentleman, slender, with a fatigued, nervous face, almost too fastidiously dressed to be another traveler, smoking constantly, saying nothing. This gentleman's name—it was altogether a disjointed, feverish business, anyway—had never been pronounced in Parr's hearing. The stranger had seemed at once a torment and a comfort to Mr. Teck. Occasionally, when Parr entered, it was as if he had interrupted a distressing scene. Mr. Teck had then jumped up with a queer smile, knocking against the chairs as he went to look out of the window. There the strange gentleman would join him, to put his hand on his shoulder, soothe him in a low voice. Then one morning Mr. Teck's rooms were empty; and the hotel clerk handed Parr an envelope containing some bank-notes and the scrawl: "Good-by. God bless you. Remember, silence."

"Here it is, ma'am."

She snatched it from him, pored over it fiercely, and thrust it into the bosom of her gown. Her lashes wearily veiled her implacable stare.

"You fool! You should have seen that he wasn't in his senses. Where is he now?"

"He should be there," Parr quavered. "By this time he might be inland."

She saw a stream of men flowing in through the jungle, a human river doomed to roll at last over some tragic brink. She clenched her hands, seemed about to rise and rush out as she was in pursuit. She said,

"You are going with me."

His jaw sagged. Gaping round him, taking the whole room as witness to this folly, he cried out, "Where to?" When she began to speak, he leaned forward over his cane, drinking in the verification of her incredible desire. Her attitude did not change; her face remained cold; her lips hardly moved, but he was aware of a tremendous force behind the words, of something inflexible, invincible, grand—perhaps of a flame without heat—that filled her empty heart with an unearthly coruscation, like a radiance thrown back from the walls of a cavern of ice.

"Do you want to die, ma'am?"

"I?" Her voice expressed in that syllable such arrogance as youth feels at the thought of death; yet she did not look young—she looked as old as eternity, and as passionless and overpowering.

He bowed his head beneath the pressure of this will and the weight of his obligation. He perceived the uselessness of describing to her the dangers that she would run there, especially at the season that was beginning. Still, for a moment he pondered the trouble he would have in taking his broken body on that pilgrimage. "And this time it will get me—just one or two little chills," he reflected, thinking of blackwater fever. However, the thought came to him that his life was no longer worth much even to himself. This sitting with folded hands, a cane between one's knees, in the tidy little house that she had given him—and but for her it might have been the crutches!

Besides, if he lasted that long, he might fill his nostrils once more with the smell of Africa, see the little fires of the *safari* flickering against the green cane-brakes, hear the songs of the march and the crooning of the camp and the voices of the jungle under the crowded stars.

The scene of this absorbing romance is now shifted to the wild Mambava country of Africa—and Lilla's desperate search for Lawrence Teck. The concluding instalment will appear in the next issue—January EVERYBODY'S—out December 15th.

Scared Stiff

All the World Loves a Parson—the Right Sort—and You'll Enjoy Journeying with this New Missionary to Falling Water, Where They Have "No Use for Medlars"

By E. R. Punshon

THE Falling Water lumber camp heard with scant concern the news that another evangelist was being sent to make yet a further attempt to bring it within the fold. The camp did not take much stock in missionaries, though on the other hand it was generally prepared to tolerate them, even though the newcomer's predecessor had been returned to headquarters nailed up in a large packing-case—thoughtful provision being made for comfortable breathing—bearing the inscription:

"No use for medlars at Falling Water."

But this, it was generally felt, had been going too far, and Snubby Brown and those associated with him in this transaction had found the public opinion of the camp distinctly against them, even though the admission was generally and frankly made that the reverend gentleman in question had brought it all upon himself.

The newcomer, therefore, the fiat had gone forth, was not to be interfered with, and Snubby himself, who, though he ruled the camp with a fist of iron, was not insensible to public opinion, declared that he would meddle with no preacher who didn't meddle with him.

"Let him preach all he wants," said Snubby; "that's his job and let him do it. But when a preacher happens along just when a jack-pot's opened and scatters the cards and the dollars and starts in then and there to let his jaw loose—well, something's bound to happen."

Something had certainly happened, as the unfortunate preacher, loaded up on a wagon in his well-secured packing-case, had found to his cost; but the general opinion at a meeting of the elder statesmen of the camp—the camp boss, the head cook, the three or four most experienced hewers—held to consider the case was that no repetition of the trouble need be feared provided the new preacher showed even the slightest discretion.

"Snubby's tough, but Snubby's white," pronounced the camp boss. "Snubby won't bother him one little bit. Besides, he knows the boys think he went too far that other time."

"Might as well let Snubby know what's expected of him," suggested one of the hewers, and it was agreed that he and another should stroll round and find Snubby and delicately hint to him that Falling Water expected him to give the new sky-pilot every opportunity to make good.

"After all, preachers are harmless enough if you don't listen to 'em," urged another hewer, a man of a tolerant nature, when presently they found Snubby basking lazily in the sunshine of that fine Sunday afternoon.

"That's all right," declared Snubby. "If no one interferes with me, I don't interfere with no one, and no gentleman can say more'n that. Now, that last feller—he brought it on himself."

The two hewers nodded gravely; for indeed to interfere just at the exact moment when a jack-pot is opened is undoubtedly to ask for trouble.

"Tact is all that's wanted, tact on all sides," declared a hewer—he of the tolerant mind—"and on no account, Snubby—no more packing-cases. It gets the camp a bad name back East when folk read pieces like that in the papers."

Snubby again assured them that the new preacher had nothing to fear from him and the deputation withdrew, on the whole fairly well satisfied. Snubby, though only recently promoted to the dignity of "hewer," had long been the outstanding personality of the camp, since it was generally admitted that he could whip his weight in wildcats and that certainly no man for miles around could whip him. Why, was it not on record that he, even he, who moved among them like any common man, had once stood up to the great and famous Jack Dempsey himself and been by him thoroughly and soundly thrashed, and did not this fact endow him with a halo that put him on terms even with the walking boss himself?

AS IT happened, when the new missionary arrived, it was Snubby Brown himself who was the first to greet him as he alighted from the buggy that brought him to the camp. He appeared to be a very young man, very tall, very thin, with large black eyes and long arms and legs that seemed to straggle aimlessly all around, as if half inclined to wander off somewhere on their own account. Snubby noticed, however, that he seemed able to control them fairly well when he wished to, and even to move them with some effect, for a somewhat heavy box laden with books which he had brought with him he handled very efficiently as he lowered it from the buggy to the ground.

"Hello, Mr. Man!" Snubby greeted him cheerfully. "You the new sky-pilot we heard was happening along?"

"I am, brother," said the stranger, with equal cheerfulness. "Name of Peter Wall. Are you one of the flock?"

Two men who lounged up in time to hear this question began to laugh. The idea of Snubby Brown as one of the flock tickled them enormously. Snubby himself turned red—as red, at least, as a countenance already tanned with wind and weather could go—and bestowed on the two hilarious ones a scowl that quickly restored them to gravity. Like other great men, Snubby was sensitive to ridicule, and he perceived that the question whether he was one of the flock was going to be addressed to him pretty frequently unless he made it clear at once that any such observation would be regarded in the light of an invitation to a mix-up.

"Ah," exclaimed the Reverend Peter Wall, interpreting correctly this byplay, "I see you are not; but you will be soon, you know. I'm after you, brother, and I mean to get you."

Snubby gasped. Peter beamed. The two onlookers retired to give their delight full vent out of sight of the formidable Snubby. Like lightning the news spread through the camp that the new missionary had signalized his appearance in camp by hailing Snubby Brown as "brother" and announcing his intention to "get him."

"Snubby Brown," they said to each other joyously, "Snubby Brown—there's going to be some fun!"

And happy as so many schoolboys they all flocked forthwith to see it.

Peter, busily establishing himself in the tiny log hut his predecessor had left in such unusual circumstances—some of the nails employed to fasten up the packing-case were still lying about the floor—was much moved and gratified by the somewhat unexpected interest his arrival appeared to be causing. Standing in the doorway of the hut he spoke a few words of gratitude and announced that while he had not intended to begin his ministry quite so soon, yet in the circumstances and in view of the interest being shown, the opening meeting would be held in one hour's time.

"And there's a brother there," added Peter Wall, with a friendly nod and smile toward Snubby Brown, whom he noticed in the front rank of the onlookers, "I hope to see with us; for the moment I set eyes on him I said to myself that there was one I was bound to get."

There was a silence of sheer apprehension. Struggling to control himself, Snubby said.

"All I've got to say to you, Mr. Man, is this: You don't interfere with me and I won't interfere with you."

"Ah," said Peter Wall; "but then, you see, to interfere with you all is just what I am here for."

Every one looked to see what Snubby had to say to that. All knew of the edict that had gone forth from the conclave of the elder statesmen of the camp, but all felt that so direct a challenge relieved Snubby from all restraint. That something was expected from him Snubby realized. His mind, which was not remarkable for originality, turned again toward thoughts of another packing-case—one not so large and with less adequate arrangements for comfortable breathing. But first he felt he must give this foolish lad, rushing in where only the peers of Jack Dempsey could afford to tread, the fullest warning possible. Slowly, formidably, he walked forward, his great shoulders squared, his long arms, ending in fists like sledgehammers, hanging by his side. When he was face to face with Peter, who had awaited quietly his coming, he said, in a low growl:

"The feller what was before you tried that game. He interfered. So he went. In a packing-case."

"Was it you did that?" asked Peter tranquilly. "It was very wrong, and it shall be my task to lead you to repentance."

Some one laughed. Snubby breathed hard. Then, feeling that in this war of words he was outmatched, he stamped suddenly and very hard with his heavy boots on Peter's toe.

"That's for warning, young fellow," he said; "so you mind."

"Here's my other foot for you if you like to stamp on that, too," said Peter, putting it forward as he spoke, and Snubby promptly stamped on it with all his force.

"I can keep that up as long as you," he said, grinning.

"I can keep it up longer than you," answered Peter, though he was pale to the lips with pain. "There is my other foot again."

Once more Snubby was about to stamp upon it, but from behind some one shouted,

"Aw, quit, Snubby; quit it!"

Snubby turned like a shot; but the speaker, having uttered his protest, had discreetly vanished and Snubby turned round on Peter again.

"I see what's the matter with you," he said. "You're spoiling for a fight, young feller."

"I am," Peter agreed.

"Good!" said Snubby, beginning to take off his coat. "In two minutes your own mother won't know you from a pan of dough."

But Peter smiled and shook his head.

"Not that kind of fighting," he said. "My weapons are not fists, and I am here to preach peace."

"Aw, quit it!" called out suddenly the camp boss, who had come up to see what the trouble was. "Let him alone, Snubby; he ain't no fighter."

"Sure thing, he ain't," growled Snubby, and turned and walked away.

"The meeting will begin," Peter called after him, "in one hour. I shall look out for you, brother."

"Maybe I sha'n't be far away," retorted Snubby, grinning over his shoulder with an air of obscure threat that for the first time made the new missionary feel a little uneasy.

THE meeting was held accordingly as Mr. Peter Wall had promised it should be, but the only person who attended it was himself. Alone he sang the opening hymn. Not one soul in all the camp seemed aware of that fresh young voice lifted in solitary praise. When he had finished, Peter paused and waited a little, and as still no one approached, he sang another hymn. A queer pathetic figure against the background of those tremendous forests his tall, thin figure made as he stood there solitary with his straggling arms and legs sprawling around, and sang and sang again, and had for audience not one single living creature, not one out of all the men scattered here and there about the camp. So then he prayed aloud for a blessing on the camp, to himself for hearers. He prayed with his eyes closed, long and fervently, and when he opened them and looked around in the hope of seeing that some small gathering had collected—even if only two or three—there was still not a living creature near.

Slowly he looked around. It was puzzling; it was disconcerting, but he was not beaten yet. He drew himself to his full height; his great black eyes began to flame and sparkle. As though he were speaking to the most attentive crowd that ever gathered round a successful minister, he began to preach.

With fervor, with eloquence, with passion he spoke and pleaded there. It was as though some hidden fount within him had been touched and opened, and to this day he believes that never, either before or since, has he spoken with such clear, convincing force. For nearly an hour the words poured from him, though all the time there was no one who came near to listen, and then he sang another hymn, his clear and sweet voice dominating, as it were, the whole camp, making itself heard above all the laughter and the gossip and the quarreling that was going on. Some of the men as they heard it grinned sheepishly at each other and turned to look where Snubby Brown sat formidably alone, an unlighted pipe in his mouth, his huge hammer-like fists resting on his knees, watching with implacable eyes the solitary figure of the young evangelist.

"To-morrow, to-morrow they will come," Peter said to himself as he turned to go back to his hut; but on the morrow it was the same.

Alone he preached, alone he prayed, solitary his clear young voice rang out in the hymn that made itself heard above all the clamor and bustle of the evening camp, and that made the men who heard it grin again sheepishly at each other and glance toward where Snubby still sat formidably in his accustomed place.

"To-morrow, to-morrow it will be different," Peter said to himself.

But when to-morrow came it was still the same. Not that he found the men unfriendly when he moved about among them. They were willing enough to talk. One or two of them helped him in little jobs he took in hand to make his log hut more weatherproof. He seemed to detect among some of them a certain undercurrent of sympathy, even though others showed toward him the scorn and contempt the commoner sort of mind shows always toward apparent failure. But all the same, when he asked them to attend his meetings, even if only once, he received none but evasive replies. One had one excuse and another another, and there were many who replied simply, "Don't want," so that the evening meeting still went quite unattended. And that for this there was some hidden reason he felt fully convinced.

PETER, however, was a persistent person; finally he succeeded in catching the camp boss in a corner whence there was no escape and in asking him if he could tell him why none of the men came to his evening meeting.

"Reckon they don't want," said the camp boss. "Anyway, it's your funeral, not mine."

"Unless there was some reason," Peter said, "they would be sure to come, some of them, just to see what it was like."

"Reckon that's their funeral," said the camp boss, "not mine."

He would say nothing more, and with that Peter had to be content, though he remained more convinced than ever that there was some reason for so complete a boycott of his meetings and thought that perhaps he was the only person in camp who did not know what this reason was. A wave of discouragement made him contemplate returning to headquarters to report his complete failure, but then again he set his teeth, his big black eyes kindled and flashed with an almost wild defiance, and he said to himself that he would go on, yea, even though never one single living creature came to hear what he had to say.

"Though I wish I could find out what is the trouble," he thought, and looking up he saw just before him the head cook smoking a reflective pipe after the labors and the triumphs of the day, and planning how next week he would achieve a pie that should outshine even the pie of to-day that had been unanimously acclaimed as the nearest thing possible to going to heaven in a bandbox.

Peter knew that not even the camp boss was more important in the camp, or more universally respected, than was the head cook, and it struck him that perhaps from him he might obtain the explanation he sought. Pointblank, therefore, he asked him if he knew why the men held so persistently aloof from his meetings.

"Reckon," observed the head cook slowly, "they don't want."

"But if any fellow began to talk anywhere in camp about anything, one or two of the others at least would always happen along to hear what it was all about," urged Peter.

"That's so," agreed the head cook gravely; "but that's different."

"Why?" asked, Peter and added, for, if he possessed the innocence of the dove, he was also not altogether without the subtlety of the serpent: "It's not as if the boys had anything against me or were unfriendly at all—they are mighty nice to me most all the time and one of them even gave me a help of that pie you made for dinner to-day. My, it was good!"

The head cook visibly softened.

"It was a good pie," he admitted simply, and added, "Some of the boys call mine the 'better-than-ma-made pies.'"

"I don't wonder," said the guileful Peter. "They are real good, and that's a fact."

The head cook softened still further; in fact it might be said that he completely melted. He looked around. He said cautiously,

"Mister, there's a hoodoo on them meetings of yourn."

Peter looked very puzzled.

"How? Why?" he asked. "In what way?"

"Snubby," said the head cook in the same cautious whisper. "Snubby Brown—don't let on I told you."

"But," protested Peter, more and more puzzled, "I don't understand. How can Snubby prevent the boys coming to my meetings?"

"He can't," agreed the head cook; "but he can pass the word round that any fellow going to hear you preach will have to fight him afterward. And that's what he's done."

"Oh-h," said Peter, seeing light at last.

"You see, it's this here way," explained the head cook: "He's got it in for you all right on account of your calling him one of the flock, which tickled the boys an awful lot, and then your telling him you was bound to get him in the end. That fetched him where he lives, so now the boys know that if they go to hear you preach they'll have to fight Snubby after."

"Are they so scared of him as all that?"

"That there remark," said the head cook with dignity, "is lacking in tact, and tact is what you want, young fellow, in your profession, if you mean to make good."

"I'm real sorry," apologized Peter. "I didn't mean that."

"No offense took if none meant," said the head cook graciously, "and it ain't that the boys are scared exactly; this crowd in this camp don't scare worth a cent. It's only as they know very well that Snubby can whip the best man among them with one hand tied behind his back."

"But he can't—couldn't fight the whole camp!" cried Peter.

"For why not?" asked the head cook.

PETER went away then, furnished with much food for thought. Evidently none of the men was likely to attend his meetings when such attendance meant a fight afterward with Snubby Brown, who, it seemed, could with one hand tied behind him lick the best man among them. What was to be done, Peter did not very clearly see, but one obvious course was to interview Snubby and try to persuade him to remove this very practical and convincing hoodoo he had laid on the meetings. So the next evening, after Peter had, as usual, prayed and preached and sung all alone, he went straight to the spot where he knew that at this time Snubby was usually to be found, implacably on the watch to see that none broke his decree without paying the forfeit.

"Snubby," said Peter, going straight to the point as usual, "why don't you want the boys to come to hear me preach?"

"Huh?" said Snubby.

"Snubby," said Peter, very earnestly, "why don't you come yourself and give them a lead?"

"Young feller," said Snubby, almost admiringly, "you've got a gall."

"No," said Peter, "a call."

He began to talk, to argue, to plead, but before he had uttered more than a dozen sentences or so, Snubby laid his enormous paw upon the young man's shoulder, pulled him slowly forward, with equal deliberation took a handkerchief from his pocket and rammed it into Peter's mouth and then released him, all without saying one word. The few men who had drawn near shouted with delighted laughter, and Peter took the handkerchief out again.

"I rather wish you had washed it first, Snubby," he said wistfully.

That was as far as they got that time, and it was not far. But again after the next night's solitary meeting—if that can be called a meeting at which but one is present—Peter went again to find Snubby in his accustomed place.

"Snubby," said Peter yearningly, "won't you quit?"

"Naw," said Snubby. "I never quit."

"'More do I," said Peter, his black eyes beginning to sparkle again. "Never."

"That's all right," said Snubby. "You want the boys to come to hear you preach; I want 'em to keep away. We'll see which of us makes good, fair fighting and no interference on either side."

"But you've no right—" cried Peter, and paused.

"Reckon," said Snubby slowly, "I've as good a right to say a man's got to fight me as you have to say a man's got to hear you preach. Young feller, you had better pack your traps and quit. There's no spellbinder ever born the boys here will listen to if they've got to fight me after."

"I attend the meetings," Peter urged, "and I don't fight you and won't. So why should any one else?"

"Because if they didn't, I would wipe the earth with them," answered Snubby simply; "but as for you, you don't count. Why, I reckon you never fought a man in your life."

"Never, and never will," answered Peter earnestly. "I am a man of peace."

"That's all right," said Snubby smilingly; "but I ain't, you see, and the boys know it."

Peter stood silent and musing. He saw no way out. No matter how willing the men might be to hear him, they would not come at the price of having to fight the formidable Snubby. It came into his mind, swift and sudden as a ray of sunshine through a rift in gathered clouds, that there was one way, and one way only, by which Snubby's opposition could be removed.

"Very well," he said; "if you must fight, you must. Shall we start in right now?"

"Huh?" said Snubby.

His slowly moving mind failed at first to grasp the significance of Peter's question, and even when Peter began to remove his coat, Snubby still did not quite grasp the other's meaning.

"Huh?" he said, varying slightly the intonation of his grunt of puzzled interrogation.

"Shall we start in right now?"Peter said again.

Then Snubby understood and, lying back, he roared aloud with laughter. He thought it was the funniest thing that ever he had seen or heard of.

Peter stood and watched and waited till this laughter should be done, while at a distance men looked round and said to each other,

"Preacher and Snubby are getting on fine, swapping yarns."

"Sorry," Snubby managed to stammer at last through the gusts of his still continuing merriment; "but, say, ain't you just too cute?"

"Shall we begin right now," Peter said again, "or have I got you scared stiff?"

Snubby stopped laughing now and sat upright. This question struck him as going a little too far.

"Young feller," he asked seriously, "do you know what you're saying? Do you mean it?"

"I do," answered Peter briefly.

Snubby was still a good deal amused, but he got slowly to his feet.

"Young feller," he said, "I warn you fair. I fight rough."

"Do you?" said Peter. "Well, I don't know how I fight, for I've never fought before."

"Then, young feller," said Snubby simply, "I'm sorry for you."

BY THIS time a little group of men had gathered near. They had seen—and heard—Snubby laugh; they had seen Peter remove his coat, and that was generally the signal that a fight was beginning. Now, a fight—even a dog-fight—was the one form of entertainment in that camp which was universally popular, and of late, since Snubby had established such undisputed supremacy, they had grown regrettably rare. Therefore, with a lingering hope, men came lounging along, even though they felt that a fight between Snubby Brown and the new preacher would be a piece of quite incredible good fortune.

"A scrap—Snubby and the new preacher—a fight—the new preacher and Snubby," they said to each other, "Aw—come off!" and when they arrived and saw the two facing each other, they could scarce believe their own eyes that looked indeed as if they would all fall out of all their heads.

"Boys," said Snubby, addressing them, "I want you to know—this ain't no doing of mine. Not being interfered with, I interferes with none. But Preacher said as he had me scared cold, so what can I do but whip him?"

"Boys," said Peter, in his turn, "I want you to know this is none of my seeking. But you know how our brother here has put a hoodoo on my meetings by saying any man who comes to them has got to fight him afterward; and if that's so, it's only a square deal that he should whip the preacher first and last and all the time—isn't that so?"

There was a little murmur of assent and

sympathy. Rough and wild as these men might be, no appeal for a square deal ever left them quite unmoved. Snubby felt that the tide of popular feeling was turning against him and he scowled ferociously around.

"Any feller got anything to say?" he demanded. "If any feller has, he only wants to open his mouth just once. Nope? Now, young feller, I'll fix you up all right as soon as you want, and then any one else what wants."

After all, it was, the onlookers generally agreed, a most uninteresting and disappointing fight. Indeed, it was hardly a fight at all. It was merely Snubby exercising himself on a punching-ball. Peter, his long arms whirling wildly round his head, came charging in, and Snubby, with one straight punch, met him and sent him flying. Peter, picking himself up, rushed in again, his arms whirling more wildly than before, and again Snubby, with one straight punch, sent him once more to the ground. When this had continued monotonously for a time, Peter began to experience a slight difficulty in rising. When it had gone on a little longer, this difficulty had become an impossibility, and so he lay still and blinked at the sky and tried to remember what it all meant, and some of the more good-natured of the bystanders picked him up and carried him home to his log hut and treated his injuries with the home-made, efficacious remedies of the camp.

"Only let this learn you, young man," they said severely, "never to monkey no more with men like Snubby Brown."

"To-morrow," muttered Peter, "to-morrow—I'll be there again."

"To-morrow," they told him with increased severity, "you won't be in no state whatever to leave your bunk."

IN THIS they were perfectly right; but all the same Peter did leave his bunk toward evening and made his way, more or less unsteadily, to where Snubby reclined in his accustomed place, relentlessly determined that no wave of sympathy should bring any to attend Peter's meeting—if Peter were in fit state to hold it—without having to pay the penalty decreed.

"Hello, young feller, feeling spry?" Snubby greeted Peter with a grin as the young man came up to him.

"Hello, brother!" said Peter, beginning to remove his coat. "Are you ready?"

"Huh? Huh?" exclaimed Snubby in various keys of astonishment, for once really taken aback. "Ain't you had enough?"

"No," said Peter; "and never shall."

"Aw, come off," said Snubby impatiently, "I don't want to fight a kid like you no more."

"Will you come to my meeting to-night?" demanded Peter.

"Talk sense," requested Snubby; "run away and play. I ain't coming to no meeting, and I ain't fighting you no more, neither."

"Why not?" asked Peter. "Have I got you scared stiff?"

This was too much, and Snubby rose to his feet.

"All right, young feller," he said; "now you're asking for it, and now you're going to get it."

It was merely a repetition of the previous night's performance. Peter came reeling resolutely in, was knocked down, rose to his feet, was knocked headlong again, and so on without change or pause, and without once getting in a blow himself, till at last the time came when from Snubby's last vicious punch he was unable to recover himself and could only lie supine and wonder dazedly who he was and where, and what was the thing as big as a balloon now attached to his shoulders where his head had once been. Two of the onlookers picked him up and carried him to his bunk, and later on the camp boss came to speak to Snubby. "Quit it, Snubby; why can't you?" he urged. "What's the fun of hammering a helpless innocent like him?"

"It ain't no fun at all," agreed Snubby; "but when a feller comes for me, ain't I a right to lay him out?"

To this the camp boss had no reply, and indeed Snubby's position seemed impregnable by every law and custom of the camp.

"Reckon there ain't nothing to worry about," Snubby called after the camp boss as that dignitary was moving away; "reckon the young feller has had enough this time."

But there Snubby guessed wrong; for next day at the accustomed hour Peter turned up once more, his face badly swollen, his gait none too steady, one eye closed, but with the other one still shining with strange fire.

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"Aw, quit!" Snubby said, exasperated, as he saw Peter thus for the third time coming—or rather reeling—toward him. "Have a little horse-sense, young feller."

"Are you coming to my meetings?" asked Peter as well as a badly swollen mouth would permit him.

"I am not," said Snubby, "and I'm not whipping you any more. 'Tain't reasonable," he complained bitterly.

"Have I got you scared stiff, then?" demanded Peter, and Snubby threw his hat in the air with a yell of rage.

"I take that from no man," he said.

The fight—if fight it can be called—followed its usual course. Peter never got in a blow; invariably his long arms were still whirling wildly round his head while Snubby's straight punches were getting in their work. A dozen times or more did Peter go down before those devastating blows, till at last he lay so still after one that had been particularly vicious that for a moment or two the onlookers feared he had been killed. But it was only a swoon, and when they had carried him back to his bunk and he had recovered consciousness, he still made an effort to get on his legs and his one sound eye still shone with a wild and unabated fire.

NEXT evening it was the same, and to see Snubby Brown whip the preacher became one of the recognized diversions of the camp.

But after a time it began to pall; and there came one evening when not more than four or five had gathered to watch.

"I'm willing to stop and I'm willing to go on just as long as he wants," Snubby explained, when on this occasion he had knocked Peter down finally. "It's always a bit of practise in punching for me; but all the same his ma ought to be told to come and take him away."

Only one of the onlookers troubled to stroll over and look at Peter lying supine and pale on the ground.

"You're sure up against it good and plenty," this man said when, at last, Peter stirred and groaned a little and tried to sit up and could not. "Why don't you quit?"

"Have I got him scared stiff?" Peter murmured faintly.

"You have not," said the other, grinning, "and you never will neither till you learn to hit straight instead of swinging your arms all round your head like a windmill gone on a spree."

"Ah," said Peter and lay still, considering this till it was dark, no one offering to help him home.

The fact was that the sentiment of the camp had moved definitively against him. It was felt that he was being merely foolish and mulish. He was considered to be slightly presumptuous in so persistently attempting thus to whip a man who, it was generally conceded, could whip the best in camp with one hand tied behind him. There was even an impression that, on the whole, what was going on was getting the camp a bad name and they were all rather sensitive about the camp's reputation.

"Back East," they said to each other, "folk'll think we don't know how to treat preachers right; they won't none of 'em know as it isn't Snubby's fault."

But Peter persisted, and Snubby with reluctance but after a businesslike fashion did what was required of him, and the camp grew frankly bored with the whole proceeding, and one evening when Peter turned up as usual there was not a single creature there to watch.

Snubby greeted him with a friendly nod.

"Reckon I should feel sort of lonesome if you ever missed," he said; "but we'll have to get it over quick, as I've got an engagement to a hand of poker later—unless you would like to miss just for this once."

"Not unless I've got you scared stiff," said Peter.

Snubby flung his hat from him with a howl of rage.

"All right, young feller, now I'll show you!" he cried menacingly.

As usual Peter charged, but on this occasion, for the first time, for he had been brooding much on the casual advice given him shortly before, his long right arm, instead of whirling wildly round his head, shot out straight and true and caught the astonished Snubby right between the eyes. That gentleman bellowed with sheer astonishment, and Peter, unexpectedly thrilling with the glorious sensation of a good blow well delivered and well placed, struck again and once more with good effect. Snubby fairly lost his temper—the thing was so unexpected; it was not in his program that he should be hit himself—and rushed wildly in, making no attempt to guard. He met a third blow, swift, well timed, effective, as good a blow as ever landed on the point of a chin and one that made him think bewilderedly of earthquakes and similar convulsions of nature as he lay flat on his back and wondered vaguely how he had got there.

But this surprise Snubby experienced was as nothing to that which Peter felt as he gazed upon his adversary supine at his feet. It utterly bewildered him to find that it was possible to give blows instead of merely receiving them; he was still more bewildered to find that this blow of his had such an effect; most of all was he bewildered by the fierce and joyous exultation he felt through every vein in his body.

But in a moment Snubby was on his feet again and charging down on Peter like an infuriated bull. He was wrought beyond his wont, but so was Peter, too, and for a space, a brief space, the battle was almost equal. Then Snubby closed, and after that it was not so much a fight as an execution. Snubby hit his adversary when and where and how he pleased. Peter had no idea how to guard; at such close quarters his long arms were quite ineffective. Very soon it was over; Peter was once more in his accustomed position half swooning on the ground, and Snubby, leaving an adversary more battered than ever before, was able to hurry away in time to join the waiting poker-party.

"But what's the matter?" they said to him as he came up. "There's an awful lump on your chin."

"That's where a skeeter stung me this morning," said Snubby.

"Your left eye looks as if it was swelling mighty bad," observed another of the party.

"Bit of a chip flew up," said Snubby, "when I was chopping kindling just now."

These explanations were accepted, though not without some doubt, even if no one dreamed of connecting them with the young preacher, the daily whipping of whom by Snubby had become a part of the accustomed routine of the camp.

But Peter, making his slow and painful way unaccompanied to his hut, was thinking hard all the time.

"Snubby always hits straight," he thought, "and he always hits me, and when I hit straight I hit him—seemed sort of easy that way, somehow. Then when we are close together, Snubby can do what he likes, and some way I don't seem to be able to do anything; so it would be better to try to keep him at a distance—and perhaps I could, as my arms are longer than his. I don't see why I shouldn't use my left, too—he does all the time, and I used to be pretty good at chopping wood with it when I was home."

He reached his bunk at last, and there he lay for a time, deep in thought in spite of his aching head, rediscovering for himself the underlying principles of the pugilistic art, just as the youthful Pascal is said to have rediscovered for himself the underlying principles of Euclid.

THE next evening, when Peter made his accustomed appearance, he found Snubby in an ugly temper. Snubby had been a good deal teased about the damaged appearance of his face, and some of the men, more for the sake of "getting his dander up" than because they ever dreamed it really was so, had suggested that perhaps the new preacher had been getting in some good work at last. So Snubby had made up his mind that the thing had got to end and now he said as much to Peter in few but earnest words.

Peter listened in silence and when Snubby had finished he said, now, in his turn, implacable, "Are you willing to come to my meetings?"

"I am not," answered Snubby, trembling all over. "All I want is to be quit of you for keeps."

"Meaning I've got you scared stiff?" Peter asked.

Snubby snatched off his hat and threw it on the ground, and for the space of a minute or more danced upon it till at last he said breathlessly:

"That fixes it—that does! Now you've got to die. When I've done with you this time, you won't want to plague the lives out of no more innocent, peaceful, respectable folk like me. Only mind, you've brought it all on yourself."

"Snubby," said Peter, "you talk so much; you ought to have been a preacher, too."

"I'll learn you," cried Snubby, "saying

things like that to me what never harmed you nohow!"

In his eagerness to inflict upon Peter the punishment he yearned to administer, Snubby departed from his usual tactics and made at his opponent a headlong charge; and, as he came, Peter's long, thin arm flashed out with astonishing speed and force and took him full and clear between the eyes.

Exactly like a dog shaking itself after a swim, Snubby paused in his headlong rush and gave himself a shake, as if to fling away the effects of this blow, and then, resuming his charge, once more encountered that long, thin arm flashing out like a piston-rod and meeting him full and square.

Again and once again he tried these rushing tactics, and never once did he succeed in getting near his man. With unvarying precision, Peter's long, thin arm flew out and in and out again, bringing off stinging, effective blows before Snubby, with his much shorter reach, could get within range.

SNUBBY was exceedingly surprised as well as much annoyed. It was unexpected; he could not understand it. None of his previous encounters with Peter had followed this course. He could not understand why there was this change, and while he was trying to think it out, Peter's arm came flashing in once more from an amazing distance and scattered all Snubby's speculations with a hit upon the chin that sent him reeling half a dozen paces backward. And then, before Snubby had recovered from this disconcerting assault, Peter was on him in a flame of exultation, hitting him hard and fast.

But Snubby was game all through, and rallying all his powers in spite of his astonished state of mind, he succeeded in beating his attacker off.

Panting, the two men stood then for a moment or two and watched each other, each trying to regain his breath, and it came into Snubby's head that something like this had happened on that historic day when he had met far-famed Jack Dempsey. Then, too, he had been held afar and hammered and hammered again without a chance being given him of hitting back, and he perceived that if he attempted any more of these blind rushes, he must infallibly suffer still more damage from that long, straight right his opponent had so suddenly developed. So he changed his plans and, with a shake of his round bullet-head as he threw off the effects of the blows he had received, he stood still, firm-footed, and invited Peter to come on, and Peter, changing his tactics too, stood a little way off, out of reach of harm from Snubby's blows and yet near enough for his long arms with their tremendous reach to remain exceedingly effective. For a time Snubby stood it, hitting back in vain, guarding with difficulty blows that came showering in like rain in a summer storm. But then his patience broke, and with a bellow of rage and protest he charged like a badgered bull; and, with his new-found fighting instinct in full play, Peter stepped to one side and hit him twice in swift succession as he thundered by. Beneath those two tremendous blows Snubby went heavily to the ground and there lay still and prone, his cheek to the sun-dried grass. For a moment or two he was quite unconscious, and then he came to himself to find he was being gently turned on his back, and that something cool and damp and refreshing was being applied to his forehead.

"What's the matter?" he muttered.

"Feeling better?" anxiously asked Peter, who was bathing his forehead with water. When Snubby realized this, he pushed him roughly aside.

"You many sorts of fool," he said, "why in the name of many things didn't you out me when I was down?"

"I don't want," said Peter. "All I'm after is scaring you stiff."

Snubby emitted a thin, piping cry of rage. That was all he had strength for.

"Now it's me or you for it!" he cried, getting to his feet.

As the effects of his fall passed away, his strength returned, and now he fought more coolly and warily and with all the skill that he possessed. But Peter was fighting with a wild demoniac energy, and the extraordinary reach of his long thin arms gave him an advantage of which he now made full use. He seemed, too, to have acquired a new mastery of those awkward sprawling legs of his, so that he moved as surely and lightly as a dancing-master before his class. Over and over again, when Snubby strove to get within reach so as to be able to launch one devastating blow to end the encounter then and there, Peter's long legs bore him triumphantly out of danger, while his long arms enabled him equally triumphantly to score a further hit or two as he retreated. He had developed, too, a habit of hitting with both hands in swift succession, 'a one-two' in fact, as it used to be called in the days of the old British prize-ring at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that was extraordinarily effective and that Snubby found most unpleasant and disconcerting. But all the same his first amazement and bewilderment were disappearing now; he was beginning to fight more skilfully and to take in especial fuller advantage of his greater knowledge of the art of guarding. And the fight was at its hottest and its fiercest when there came round the corner of the poplar bluff that sheltered the two combatants from general observation—for so far this Homeric battle had not a single witness—the camp boss and one of the older hewers, consulting together on some technical point of the business of lumbering. No one else was near, for to see Snubby hammer the preacher was a pastime that had long since palled upon the camp.

"Hello; what's this?" the camp boss said. "Two of the boys having a mix-up?"

"Nope," answered the old hewer indifferently; "only Snubby Brown whipping the new preacher."

"I ain't so sure," observed the camp boss after a long pause. "Looks to me more like the new preacher whipping Snubby Brown."

As he spoke the two figures reeled apart and then staggered together once more, still fiercely hitting, guarding, hitting back again, both badly battered by now but with the lust of battle still fierce in their eyes. Breast to breast they stood, neither yielding an inch, Snubby's huge hammer-like fists smashing out in swift succession, Peter's long thin arms working with the unceasing regularity of a machine at full speed.

NOW neither man thought any more of guarding; the one idea left to each man was to hit as hard and as fast and as often as he could before his strength failed. Near were they now, eye to eye and breast to breast, as two lovers embracing, though fierce as fire was this embrace of theirs in which they were still locked when the camp boss shouted out loud and broke into a run. By the time he reached the spot where they fought, Snubby, his greater experience telling in the end, managed for a moment to break loose, and, exerting all his remaining strength, got in at last one huge, terrific low that swept Peter to the ground.

Uttering a whoop of triumph, Snubby bestrode his prostrate adversary, but even while his cry of victory still trembled on the air, he reeled, all things swam around together before his eyes, he fell upon one knee, tried to recover himself and failed, and then collapsed slowly forward.

The camp boss found them lying peacefully side by side, their eyes closed, like two little children tired out with play and now sleeping together.

"Gosh!" said the camp boss regretfully. "What an all-fired waste, a fight like that going on and not a living creature to see it. Hello, Snubby; how you feeling?"

Snubby opened his one sound eye, the left.

"To-morrow," he muttered; "to-morrow I'll fix him for good and all."

The camp boss turned to Peter.

"Hello," he said; "how's you feeling?"

Peter opened his one sound eye, the right.

"To-morrow," he muttered feebly; "to-morrow I'll have him scared stiff."

"Well, if them two don't beat all!" murmured the camp boss.

He summoned help; the two combatants were removed to their respective bunks, and the camp boss and the old hewer who had been with him were both kept busy the rest of the evening recounting what they had seen at the end of that great fight it was so sad to think no living creature had really witnessed, while a constant succession of visitors passed before the bunk where Snubby Brown lay and observed with awe and wonder the many plain signs and tokens Peter had managed to inflict on that cast-iron visage.

They agreed it would be a lesson to them all never again to disregard even the smallest disagreement. "You can never tell," they said to each other sadly. And they consoled themselves with the reflection that the next fight between Snubby and Peter would be one really worth seeing, something to remember, something to talk about for years to some.

"It'll go one better," they declared,

"than Jack Dempsey and the Frenchy." "Wouldn't give a hill of beans," they said to each other, "to see Dempsey and the Frenchy when we've got Snubby Brown and the new missionary right here."

The next evening the whole camp assembled, every single man, and all of them bubbling over with excitement. But the camp boss intervened. It was a courageous thing to do and his authority was strained to the utmost. Indeed, at one time it was an even chance that he would be provided with a suit of tar and a ride on a rail out of the camp. But in the end he carried his point. He declared that a good fight was never the worse for keeping. He pointed out that both men were at present below par, so to say. By waiting a week a much superior affair would be provided, he said, and he reminded them that to witness such comparatively trivial and unimportant affairs as the settling of the disagreements between men like Willard and Dempsey or Dempsey and Carpentier, it was often necessary to wait not a week but many months.

Besides, in secret, the camp boss wished to curry favor with the walking boss by getting the fight postponed till that important person could be informed and have a chance to be present.

The postponement of the fight for a week was therefore agreed on and the news of this decision was promptly communicated to the two principals.

"You'll be able to settle things once and for all," the camp boss told them. "If Snubby wins, Preacher'll have to promise never to interfere no more with Snubby, what only wants to live the peaceful life, or else Preacher must quit camp for good, and if he don't, then he'll be rid out of camp on a rail and treated rough if he ever comes back. And as for Snubby, if he loses, then he's got to promise faithful to attend every meeting Preacher holds in this here camp from now on forevermore, and a committee will be appointed to see he does it, too. So both you boys will know exactly what you're fighting for."

"It seems you mean us to play for big stakes," said Peter slowly, "but maybe I'll raise them more'n a little."

The camp boss did not know what Peter meant by this and he did not ask.

"All the same," said Snubby to the camp boss with some bitterness, "I don't see why Preacher should be so terrible set on me. Why can't he start in to save your soul instead of mine?"

The camp boss, at this question, turned a little pale.

"Reckon mine ain't worth bothering about," he said hastily, "and you ought to be uncommon proud yours is different. Seems a lot of trouble for mighty little," he added thoughtfully; "but there's no accounting for tastes—I knew a man once as liked drinking cold water."

IT WAS perhaps the biggest crowd that ever collected in the history of the lumber camps that assembled on the appointed day to witness the final fight between Snubby and the missionary. From miles around men came, some starting before dawn so as to be sure of arriving in time. In the best position sat the walking boss with the camp boss on his right, the head cook—looking a little worn, for he had exhausted himself with one great effort to produce a pie really worthy of such an occasion—on his left, and all the hewers of the camp seated near. Around stood the mass of the onlookers, twenty and thirty deep in places, but all so carefully arranged on the slope of the ground that practically every man had a good view of the open space in the center where the great fight was to be fought.

Patiently the crowd waited. On the whole, the betting, of which there was a good deal, favored Snubby; but some backed Peter on the general grounds that, when a preacher took to fighting, wildcats no longer counted.

The time drew on, and a cheer greeted the appearance of Peter, who looked a little pale and nervous, but on the whole seemed none the worse for his recent tumultuous experiences. He had on his long black coat and was carrying his books under his arm. At the same moment Snubby appeared. He had not books but the haft of an ax tucked under his arm, and he also, his admirers noted, looked in good condition.

"Both of 'em's been in hard training," the whisper went round, and men nodded, well pleased; for the better the combatants were trained the better worth watching the fight was likely to be.

"Friends and brethren," said Peter,

taking up his position, "we will begin by singing a hymn."

This was unexpected. Men stared at each other. One man shouted out,

"Aw, cut the hymn; get to the fight!"

"If that gent," said Snubby, stepping truculently forward, "will open his mouth just once more, he'll get all the fight he wants to last him till the day of resurrection."

Peter, giving out the hymn, began to sing. His long arms swung up and down as he beat the time. Almost before they understood, almost before they realized what they were doing, they were all singing heartily. The effect was good, as indeed always is the effect of the voices of many men singing together in the open air. On the whole they rather enjoyed it; and though they thought it an odd preliminary to a fight, still they supposed it was natural when a preacher was to be one of the combatants. So when it was over they settled themselves down comfortably, supposing that proceedings were now about to begin. But Peter said, "Now we will pray."

"Boss," said a plaintive voice from behind somewhere, "what about this here fight?"

"Pass that feller out to me," raved Snubby, "and I'll see he has all the fight he wants."

BUT no one accepted the invitation, and when Peter had finished his extempore prayer he began to preach. It was a good address, very plain-spoken, sparing not a single one of their numerous faults and pointing out very clearly to them what must be the inevitable consequences if they did not mend their ways.

"Why," he said, "some of you are so lost to all sense of decency I almost fear you wouldn't have come if you had known that, instead of your seeing me and Snubby Brown trying to whip each other, it was a gospel meeting we were going to hold."

He paused to let this sink in, and they all looked at each other in a dazed sort of way and a few of them smiled feebly, and all of them knew that what Peter said was so. They had come to a fight; they found a gospel meeting instead, and Peter, walking up and down inside that roped-in enclosure where the fight was to have been held, swinging in vigorous exhortation and denunciation those long arms of his his hearers had hoped to see punching the attentive Snubby's head, took the fullest advantage of the opportunity that had come his way.

"They shall hear the truth about themselves to-day," he thought to himself grimly, "if they never do again."

For fully an hour he talked, and then he stopped and thanked them for their attention and for their attendance and especially for having come in such large numbers.

"A meeting to gladden the heart of any preacher," he said. "To-morrow at the same hour we will meet again. I trust that all present to-night will come again to-morrow."

"If any don't, I'll let you know, boss," said Snubby unexpectedly.

A very suppressed, somewhat dazed assembly began to disperse, and there are some who tell to this day of how the walking boss went home with the camp boss, talking all the way and the camp boss listening and seeming to grow smaller and smaller all the time.

"And me at my age," said the walking boss pathetically, "and come the best part of two hundred miles and nearly broke my neck hurrying."

The camp boss passed a weary hand across a bewildered forehead.

"Seems like a dream," he said.

As for Peter, he was both happy and satisfied, and only one thing troubled him at all.

"Snubby," he said, as they walked away together to share their evening meal of fried pork and beans, "Snubby, do you think they will come again?"

"You bet," said Snubby briefly.

Peter looked all the joyous gratitude he felt.

"You see," explained Snubby, "I've passed the word round that any that stays away will have to come and mix with you—whip or be whipped—and they would most rather face a sackful of wildcats than you. I ain't blaming them, either."

"Why, Snubby," gasped Peter, "you never——"

"I did so," said Snubby, "and it'll work all right. You see, you've got 'em all scared stiff—same as you got me."

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921

The Red House Murder

And a Detective New to Fiction

Antony Gillingham Does Some Very Shrewd Guessing and Solves the Red House Mystery

By A. A. Milne

Author of "Once On a Time," "Mr. Pim Passes By," etc.

Illustrations by George Giguère

IF TESTIMONY of the senses was to be accepted without a doubt, the man found murdered in the office at the Red House was Robert Ablett, and from whatever could be, in all reason, deduced from happenings both before and after the fact, the murderer was the dead man's brother Mark, wealthy owner of the fine old English country house. Mark had disappeared and left no trace. That morning at breakfast he had received a letter and announced to his house-guests the impending arrival of Robert, a ne'er-do-well, who had been in Australia for the past fifteen years. He made it plain that his brother would not be welcome, and with evident purpose sent his friends off for a day on the golf-links.

At three o'clock that afternoon, Antony Gillingham, visiting in the neighborhood, came to call on his friend Bill Beverley, one of the Red House guests, and arrived at what was apparently the very moment of the discovery of the crime by Matthew Cayley, a cousin of Mark and one of his employees.

The preliminary police investigation—the questioning of servants and so forth—brought out nothing more than that soon after Robert arrived loud talking, then shots were heard in the office, and that no one had seen Mark for some little time before this occurred and there had been no sign of him since. To the obvious conclusion from this, Antony was unable to agree. His astute mind had noted several curious circumstances in Cayley's behavior at the moment of the crime's discovery, and the latter's theory of Mark's accidental shooting of Robert and then running away he dismissed as false. And there was another matter that could not be overlooked: He had reason to believe that Cayley was jealous of Mark's attentions to Angela Norbury, who lived with her mother on a farm in the neighborhood.

Cayley was eager that the police drag a pond on the estate, and while these placid waters gave up nothing, they suggested to Antony that Cayley might now safely hide something within their depths. The discovery of a secret underground passage leading from the library of Red House to a bowling-green further whetted his interest in the mystery.

He obtained the assistance of Bill Beverley in his investigations. Their persistent watching of Cayley's movements was finally rewarded. The next night they saw him row out on the pond and drop something overboard. By previously determined cross-sights they were enabled to locate the exact spot on the pond and recover a large valise.

It contained a brown-flannel suit, which

Bill recognized as belonging to Mark, with the rest of a man's ordinary outfit—underwear, shirt, tie, socks and shoes. In the pocket of the coat was the letter the missing man had received, presumably from Robert, the day of the murder. Also, the amateur sleuths found two keys—one to the Red House office, the door of which was locked when Antony found Cayley trying to break in after the shots had been heard. The other opened a cupboard, and in this Antony expected to make an important discovery. But it yielded nothing. He finally disclosed the object of his search to Bill. He was looking for a collar. The man's outfit in the bag had been complete—*with the exception of a collar!*

Why, if the bag contained the clothes Mark wore when he killed his brother, was the collar not among them? And then the men remembered seeing a collar in the linen-basket of a bedroom adjacent to the office.

Did this belong to the attire consigned to the pond? Why send the collar quite casually to the wash and take so much trouble to hide everything else? The men gave it up.

But the inquest, about to be held, might do something toward clearing up the mystery.

THE coroner, having made a few commonplace remarks as to the terrible nature of the tragedy which they had come to investigate that afternoon, proceeded to outline the case to the jury. Witnesses would be called to identify the deceased as Robert Ablett, the brother of the owner of the Red House, Mark Ablett. It would be shown that he was something of a ne'er-do-well who had spent most of his life in Australia, and that he had announced, in what might almost be called a threatening letter, his intention of visiting his brother that afternoon. There would be evidence of his arrival, of his being shown into the scene of the tragedy—a room in the Red House commonly called "the office"—and of his brother's entrance into that room. The jury would have to form their own opinion as to what happened there. But whatever happened, happened almost instantaneously. Within two minutes of Mark Ablett's entrance, as would be shown in the evidence, a shot was heard, and when—perhaps five minutes later—the room was forced open, the dead body of Robert Ablett was found stretched upon the floor. As regards Mark Ablett, nobody had seen him from the moment of his going into the room, but evidence would be called to show that he had enough money on him at the time to take him to any other part of the country, and that a man answering to his description had been observed on the platform of Stanton station, apparently waiting to catch the 3:55 up-train to London. As the jury would realize, such evidence of identity was not always reliable. Missing men had a way of being seen in a dozen different places at once. In any case, there was no doubt that for the moment Mark Ablett had disappeared.

"Seems a sound man," whispered Antony to Bill, and Bill nodded. "Doesn't talk too much."

Antony did not expect to learn much from the evidence—he knew the facts of the case so well by now—but he wondered if Inspector Birch had developed any new theories. If so, they would appear in the coroner's examination, for the coroner would certainly have been coached by the police as to the important facts to be extracted from each witness. Bill was the first to be put through it.

"Now, about this letter, Mr. Beverley?" he was asked, when his chief evidence was over. "Did you see it at all?"

"I didn't see the actual writing. I saw the back of it."

"You don't know what was in it, then?"

Bill had a sudden shock. He had read the letter only that morning. He knew quite well what was in it. But it wouldn't do to admit this. And then, just as he was about to perjure himself, he remembered; Antony had heard Cayley telling the inspector.

"I knew afterward. I was told. But Mark didn't read it out at breakfast."

"You gathered, however, that it was an unwelcome letter?"

"Oh, yes."

"Would you say that Mark was frightened by it?"

"Not frightened. Sort of bitter—and resigned. Sort of 'O Lord, here we are again!' "

There was a titter here and there. The

coroner smiled, and tried to pretend that he hadn't.

"Thank you, Mr. Beverley."

The next witness was summoned by the name of Andrew Amos.

"He lives at the inner lodge," whispered Bill to Antony.

All that Amos had to say was that a stranger had passed by his lodge at a little before three that afternoon and had spoken to him. He had seen the body and recognized it as the man.

"What did he say?"

" 'Is this right for the Red House?' or something like that, sir."

"What did you say?"

"I said: 'This is the Red House. Who do you want to see?' He was a bit rough-looking, you know, sir, and I didn't know what he was doing there."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, he said, 'Is Mister Mark Ablett at home?' It doesn't sound much put like that, sir, but I didn't care about the way he said it. So I got in front of him like and said, 'What do you want, eh?' and he gave a sort of chuckle and said, 'I want to see my dear brother Mark.' Well, then I took a closer look at him, and I see—that p'raps he might be his brother, so I said: 'If you'll follow the drive, sir, you'll come to the house. Of course I can't say if Mr. Ablett's at home.' And he gave a sort of nasty laugh again, and said: 'Fine place Mister Mark Ablett's got here. Plenty of money to spend, eh?' Well, then I had another look at him, sir, because gentlemen don't talk like that, and if he was Mr. Ablett's brother—but before I could make up my mind, he laughed, and went on. That's all I can tell you, sir."

Andrew Amos stepped down and moved away to the back of the room, nor did Antony take his eyes off him until he was assured that Amos intended to remain there until the inquest was over.

"Who's Amos talking to now?" he whispered to Bill.

"Parsons. One of the gardeners. He's at the outside lodge on the Stanton road. They're all here to-day. Sort of holiday for 'em."

"I wonder if he's giving evidence, too," thought Antony.

He was. He followed Amos. He had been at work on the lawn in front of the house, and had seen Robert Ablett arrive. He didn't hear the shot—not to notice. He was a little hard of hearing. He had seen a gentleman arrive about five minutes after Mr. Robert.

"Can you see him in court now?" asked the coroner.

Parsons looked round slowly. Antony caught his eye and smiled.

"That's him," said Parsons, pointing.

"Did anybody come out of the house before this gentleman's arrival?"

"No, sir. That is to say, I didn't see 'em."

Stevens followed. She gave her evidence much as she had given it to the inspector. Nothing new was brought out by her examination. Then came Elsie. As the reporters scribbled down what she had overheard, they added in brackets, "Sensation" for the first time that afternoon.

"How soon after you had heard this did the shot come," asked the coroner.

"Almost at once, sir."

"Were you still in the hall?"

"Oh, no, sir. I was just outside Mrs. Stevens' room. The housekeeper, sir."

"You didn't think of going back to the hall to see what had happened?"

"Oh, no, sir. I just went in to Mrs. Stevens, and she said 'Oh, what was that?" frightened-like. And I said, 'That was in the house, Mrs. Stevens, that was.' Just like something going off, it was."

"Thank you," said the coroner gravely.

THERE was another emotional disturbance in the room as Cayley went into the witness-box; not "Sensation" this time, but an eager and, as it seemed to Antony, sympathetic interest. Now they were getting to grips with the drama.

He gave his evidence carefully, unemotionally—the lies with the same slow deliberation as the truth. Antony watched him intently, wondering what it was about him that had this odd sort of attractiveness. For Antony, who knew that he was lying, and lying (as he believed) not for Mark's sake but his own, yet could not help sharing some of that general sympathy with him.

"Was Mark ever in possession of a revolver?" asked the coroner.

"Not to my knowledge."

"You were alone with him all that morning. Did he talk about this visit of Robert's at all?"

"I didn't see very much of him in the morning. We lunched together, and he talked of it then a little."

"In what terms?"

"Well—" He hesitated, and then went on: "I can't think of a better word than 'peevishly.' Occasionally he said, 'What do you think he wants?' or 'Why couldn't he have stayed where he was?' or 'I don't like the tone of his letter. Do you think he means trouble?' "

"Did he express his surprise that his brother should be in England?"

"I think he was always afraid that he would turn up one day."

"Yes. You didn't hear any conversation between the brothers when they were in the office together?"

"No. I happened to go into the library just after Mark had gone in, and I was there all the time."

"Was the library door open?"

"Oh, yes."

"If anybody had come out of the office while you were in the library, would you have heard?"

"I think so. Unless they had come out very quietly on purpose."

"Yes. Would you call Mark a hasty-tempered man?"

Cayley considered this carefully before answering.

"Hasty-tempered, yes," he said. "But not violent-tempered."

"Was he fairly athletic? Active and quick?"

"Active and quick, yes. Not particularly strong."

"Yes. One question more: Was Mark in the habit of carrying any considerable sum of money about with him?"

"Yes. He always had one one-hundred-pound note on him, and perhaps ten or twenty pounds as well."

"Thank you, Mr. Cayley."

Cayley went back heavily to his seat.

"Damn it," said Antony to himself; "why do I like the fellow?"

"Antony Gillingham!"

Antony smiled at Bill and stepped up to give his evidence.

He explained how he came to be staying at the George at Woodham, how he had heard that the Red House was in the neighborhood, how he had walked over to see his friend Beverley, and had arrived just after the tragedy. Thinking it over afterward, he was fairly certain that he had heard the shot, but it had not made any impression on him at the time. He had come to the house from the Woodham end and consequently had seen nothing of Robert Ablett, who had been a few minutes in front of him. From this point, his evidence coincided with Cayley's.

"You and the last witness reached the French windows together and found them shut?"

"Yes."

"You pushed them in and came to the body. Of course you had no idea whose body it was?"

"No."

"Did Mr. Cayley say anything?"

"He turned the body over, just so as to see the face, and when he saw it, he said, 'Thank God!' "

Again the reporters wrote, "Sensation."

"Did you understand what he meant by that?"

"I asked him who it was, and he said that it was Robert Ablett. Then he explained that he was afraid at first it was the cousin with whom he lived—Mark."

"Yes. Did he seem upset?"

"Very much so at first. Less when he found that it wasn't Mark."

"Did anybody come out of the house while you were coming up the drive?"

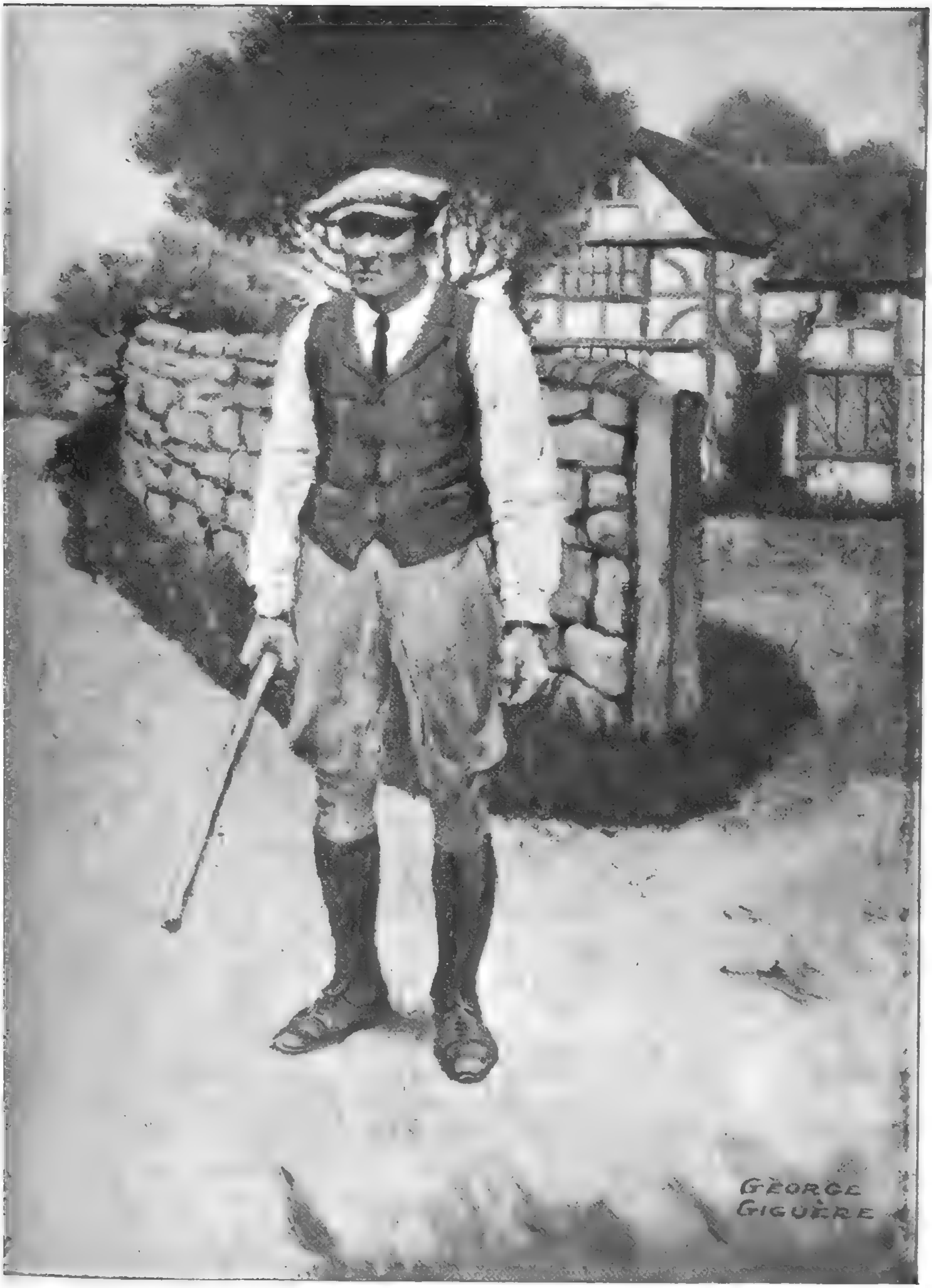
"No."

"Thank you, Mr. Gillingham."

He was followed by Inspector Birch. The inspector, realizing that this was his afternoon, and that the eyes of the world were upon him, produced a plan of the house and explained the situation of the different rooms. The plan was then handed to the jury.

INSPECTOR BIRCH, so he told the world, had arrived at the Red House at 4:42 P.M. on the afternoon in question. He had been received by Mr. Matthew Cayley, who had made a short statement to him, and he had then proceeded to examine the scene of the crime. The French windows had been forced from outside. The door leading into the hall was locked; he had searched the room thoroughly and had

"'Is Mister Mark Ablett at home?' he said. I didn't care about the way he said it, so I got in front
dear brother Mark. Fine place Mister Ma



m like and said, 'What do you want, eh?' and he gave a sort of a chuckle and said, 'I want to see my blett's got here. Plenty of money to spend, eh?'"

found no trace of a key. In the bedroom leading out of the office he had found an open window. There were no marks on the window, but it was a low one, and, as he found from experiment, quite easy to step out of without touching it with the boots. A few yards outside the window a shrubbery began. There were no recent footmarks outside the window, but the ground was in a very hard condition owing to the absence of rain. In the shrubbery, however, he found several twigs on the ground, recently broken off, together with other evidence that some body had been forcing its way through. He had questioned everybody connected with the estate, and none of them had been into the shrubbery recently. By forcing a way through the shrubbery it was possible for a person to make a détour of the house and get to the Stanton end of the park without ever being in sight of the house itself.

He had made inquiries about the deceased. Deceased had left for Australia some fifteen years ago, owing to some financial trouble at home. Deceased was not well spoken of in the village from which he and his brother had come. Deceased and his brother had never been on good terms, and the fact that Mark Ablett had come into money had been a cause of great bitterness between them. It was shortly after this that Robert had left for Australia.

He had made inquiries at Stanton station. It had been market day at Stanton and the station had been more full of animals than usual. Nobody had particularly noticed the arrival of Robert Ablett; there had been a good many passengers by the 2:10 train that afternoon, the train by which Robert had undoubtedly come from London. A witness, however, would state that he noticed a man resembling Mark Ablett at the station at 3:53 P.M. that afternoon, and this man caught the 3:55 up-train to town.

There was a pond in the grounds of the Red House. He had dragged this, but without result.

Antony listened to him carelessly, thinking his own thoughts all the time. Medical evidence followed, but there was nothing to be got from that. He felt so close to the truth; at any moment something might give his brain the one little hint which it wanted. Inspector Birch was just pursuing the ordinary. Whatever else this case was, it was not ordinary. There was something uncanny about it.

John Borden was giving evidence. He was on the up platform seeing a friend off by the 3:55 on Tuesday afternoon. He had noticed a man on the platform with coat collar turned up and a scarf round his chin. He had wondered why the man should do this on such a hot day. The man seemed to be trying to escape observation. Directly the train came in, he hurried into a carriage. And so on.

"There's always a John Borden at every murder case," said Antony to himself.

"Have you ever seen Mark Ablett?"

"Once or twice, sir."

"Was it he?"

"I never really got a good look at him, sir, what with his collar turned up and the scarf and all. But directly I heard of the sad affair, and that Mr. Ablett was missing, I said to my wife, 'Now, I wonder if that was Mr. Ablett I saw at the station?' So then we talked it over and decided that I ought to come and tell Inspector Birch. It was just Mr. Ablett's height, sir."

Antony went on with his thoughts.

THE coroner was summing up. The jury, he said, had now heard all the evidence and would have to decide what had happened in that room between the two brothers. How had the deceased met his death? The medical evidence would probably satisfy them that Robert Ablett had died from the effects of a bullet-wound in the head. Who had fired that bullet? If Robert Ablett had fired it himself, no doubt they would bring in a verdict of suicide, but if this had been so, where was the revolver which had fired it, and what had become of Mark Ablett? If they disbelieved in this possibility of suicide, what remained? Accidental death, justifiable homicide, and murder. Could the deceased have been killed accidentally? It was possible, but, then, would Mark Ablett have run away? The evidence that he had run away from the scene of the crime was strong. They would have then to consider whether he would have run away if he had been guiltless of his brother's death. No doubt innocent people lost their heads sometimes. It was possible that if it were proved afterward that Mark

Ablett had shot his brother, it might also be proved that he was justified in so doing and that when he ran away from his brother's corpse he had really nothing to fear at the hands of the law. In this connection he need hardly remind the jury that they were not the final tribunal, and that if they found Mark Ablett guilty of murder, it would not prejudice his trial in any way if and when he was apprehended. The jury could consider their verdict.

They considered it. They announced that the deceased had died as the result of a bullet-wound, and that the bullet had been fired by his brother, Mark Ablett.

Bill turned round to Antony at his side. But Antony was gone. Across the room he saw Andrew Amos and Parsons going out of the door together, and Antony was between them.

THE inquest had been held at the Lamb at Stanton; at Stanton Robert Ablett was to be buried next day. Bill waited about outside for his friend, wondering where he had gone. Then, realizing that Cayley would be coming out to his car directly, and that a farewell talk with Cayley would be a little embarrassing, he wandered round to the yard at the back of the inn, lit a cigaret, and stood surveying a torn and weather-beaten poster on the stable wall. "GRAND THEATRICAL ENTER" it announced, to take place on "Wednesday, Decem." Bill smiled to himself as he looked at it, for the part of *Joe*, a loquacious postman, had been played by "William B. Beverl," as the remnants of the poster still maintained, and he had been much less loquacious than the author had intended, having forgotten his words completely, but it had been all great fun. And he stopped smiling, for there would be no more fun now at the Red House.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said the voice of Antony behind him. "My old friends Amos and Parsons insisted on giving me a drink."

He slipped his hand into the crook of Bill's arm and smiled happily at him.

"Why were you so keen about them?' asked Bill a little resentfully. "I couldn't think where on earth you had got to."

Antony didn't say anything. He was staring at the poster.

"When did this happen?" he asked.

"What?"

Antony waved to the poster.

"Oh, that? Last Christmas."

Antony began to laugh to himself.

"Were you good?"

"Rotten. I don't profess to be an actor."

"Mark good?"

"Oh, yes. He loves it."

"Rev. Henry Stutters—Mr. Matthew Cay," read Antony. "Was that our friend Cayley?"

"Yes."

"Miss Norris wasn't playing, I see."

"My dear Tony, she's a professional. Of course she wasn't."

Antony laughed again.

"A great success, was it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"I'm a fool, and a blamed fool," Antony announced solemnly. "And a blamed fool," he said again under his breath as he led Bill away from the poster and out of the yard into the road. "And a blamed fool. Even now—" He broke off and then asked suddenly, "Did Mark ever have much trouble with his teeth?"

"He went to his dentist a good deal. But what on earth——"

Antony laughed a third time.

"What luck!" he chuckled. "But how do you know?"

"We go to the same man; Mark recommended him to me. Cartwright, in Wimpole Street."

"Cartwright, in Wimpole Street," repeated Antony thoughtfully. "Yes; I can remember that. Cartwright, in Wimpole Street. Did Cayley go to him, too, by any chance?"

"I expect so. Oh, yes; I know he did. But what on earth——"

"What was Mark's general health like? Did he see a doctor much?"

"Hardly at all, I should think. Tony, I wish you'd——"

Antony held up a hand and hushed him into silence.

"One last question," he said. "Was Mark fond of swimming?"

"No; he hated it. I don't believe he *could* swim. Tony, are you mad, or am I? Or is this a new game?"

Antony squeezed his arm.

"Dear old Bill," he said, "it's a game. What a game! And the answer is, Cartwright, in Wimpole Street."

They walked in silence for half a mile or so along the road to Woodham. Bill tried two or three times to get his friend to talk, but Antony had only grunted in reply. He was just going to make another attempt when Antony came to a sudden stop.

"I wonder if you'd do something for me, Bill," he said, looking at him with some doubt.

"What sort of thing?"

"Well, it's really very important. It's just the one thing I want now."

Bill was suddenly enthusiastic again.

"I say, have you really found it all out?"

Antony nodded.

"At least, I'm very nearly there, Bill. There's just this one thing I want now. It means your going back to Stanton. Well, we haven't come far; it won't take you long. Do you mind?"

"My dear Antony Sherlock Holmes, I am at your service."

Antony gave him a smile and was silent for a little, thinking.

"Is there another inn at Stanton—fairly close to the station?"

"The Plough and Horses—just at the corner where the road goes up to the station—is that the one you mean?"

"That would be the one. I suppose you could do with a drink, couldn't you?"

"Certainly could," said Bill, with a grin.

"Good! Then have one at the Plough and Horses. Have two, if you like, and talk to the landlord, or landlady, or whoever serves you. I want you to find out if anybody stayed there on Monday night."

"Robert?" said Bill eagerly.

"I didn't say Robert," said Antony, smiling. "I just want you to find out if they had a visitor who slept there on Monday night. A stranger. If so, then any particulars you can get of him, without letting the landlord know that you are interested——"

"Leave it to me," broke in Bill. "I know just what you want."

"Don't assume that it was Robert—or anybody else. Let *them* describe the man to you."

"Right you are!" said Bill confidently. "Where do I meet you again?"

"Probably at the George. If you get there before me, you can order dinner for eight o'clock. Anyhow, we'll meet at eight, if not before."

"Good!" He nodded to Antony and strode off back to Stanton again.

Antony stood watching him with a little smile at his enthusiasm. Then he looked round slowly, as if in search of something. Suddenly he saw what he wanted. Twenty yards farther on a lane wandered off to the left, and there was a gate a little way up on the right-hand side of it. Antony walked to the gate, filling his pipe as he went. Then he lit his pipe, sat on the gate, and took his head in his hands.

"Now then," he said to himself, "let's begin at the beginning."

IT WAS nearly eight o'clock when William arrived, tired and dusty, at the George Inn, to find Antony, cool and clean, waiting for him.

"Is dinner ready?" were Bill's first words.

"Yes."

"Then I'll have a wash. Lord, I'm tired!"

When the first edge of his appetite had worn off, and he was able to spare a little time between the mouthfuls, Bill gave an account of his adventures. The landlord of the Plough and Horses had been close-mouthed, decidedly close-mouthed—Bill had been unable at first to get anything out of him. But Bill had been tactful; bless you, how tactful he had been!

"He kept on about the inquest, and what a queer affair it had been, and so on, and how there'd been an inquest in his wife's family once, which he seemed rather proud about, and I kept saying, 'Pretty busy I suppose just now,' and then he'd say, 'Middlin',' and go on again about Susan—that was the one that had the inquest—he talked about it as if it were a disease—and then I'd try again. 'Slack times I expect just now, eh?' and he'd say, 'Middlin'' again, and then it was time to offer him another drink, and I didn't seem to be getting much nearer. But I got him at last. I asked him if he knew John Borden—he was the man who said he'd seen Mark at the station. Well, he knew all about Borden, and after he'd told me all about Borden's wife's family, and how one of them had been burned to death—after you with the beer—thanks—well, then I said carelessly that it must be very hard to remember anybody whom you had just seen once, so as to identify him afterward, and he agreed that it would be 'middlin' hard,' and then——"

"Give me three guesses," interrupted Antony. "You asked him if he remembered everybody who came to his inn?"

"That's it. Bright, wasn't it?"

"Brilliant. And what was the result?"

"The result was a woman."

"A woman?" said Antony eagerly.

"A woman," said Bill impressively. "Of course I thought it was going to be Robert—so did you, didn't you?—but it wasn't. It was a woman. Came quite late on Monday night in a car—driving herself—went off early next morning."

"Did he describe her?"

"Yes. She was middlin'. Middlin' tall, middlin' age, middlin' color, and so on. Doesn't help much, does it? But still—a woman. Does that upset your theory?"

Antony shook his head.

"No, Bill; not at all," he said.

"You knew all the time?"

"Wait till to-morrow. I'll tell you everything to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" said Bill, in great disappointment.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing to-night. Mark Ablett did not kill his brother."

"And Cayley did?"

"That's another question, Bill. However, the answer is that Cayley didn't, either."

"Then who on earth——"

"Have some more beer," said Antony, with a smile. And Bill had to be content with that.

They were early to bed that evening, for both of them were tired. Bill slept loudly and defiantly, but Antony lay awake, wondering. What was happening at the Red House now? Perhaps he would hear in the morning; perhaps he would get a letter. He went over the whole story again from the beginning—was there any possibility of a mistake?

In the morning there was a letter for him.

"My dear Mr. Gillingham:

"I gather from your letter that you have made certain discoveries which you may feel it your duty to communicate to the police, and that in this case my arrest on a charge of murder would inevitably follow. Why, in these circumstances, you should give me such ample warning of your intentions I do not understand, unless it is that you are not wholly out of sympathy with me. But whether or not you sympathize, at any rate you will want to know—and I want you to know—the exact manner in which Mark Ablett met his death and the reasons which made that death necessary. If the police have to be told anything, I would rather that they, too, knew the whole story. They, and even you, may call it murder, but by that time I shall be out of the way. Let them call it what they like.

"I must begin by taking you back to a summer day fifteen years ago, when I was a boy of thirteen and Mark a young man of twenty-five. His whole life was make-believe, and just now he was pretending to be a philanthropist. He sat in our little drawing-room, flicking his gloves against the back of his left hand, and my mother, good soul, thought what a noble young gentleman he was, and Philip and I, hastily washed and crammed into collars, stood in front of him, nudging each other and kicking the backs of our heels and cursing him in our hearts for having interrupted our game. He had decided to adopt one of us, kind Cousin Mark. Heaven knows why he chose *me*. Philip was eleven, two years longer to wait. Perhaps that was why.

"Well, Mark educated me. I went to a public school and to Cambridge, and I became his secretary. Well, much more than his secretary, as your friend Beverley perhaps has told you: his land-agent, his financial adviser, his courier, his—but this most of all—his audience. Mark could never live alone. There must always be somebody to listen to him. And he used to write me the absurdest long letters when I was away from him, letters which I read once and then tore up. The futility of the man!

"It was three years ago that Philip got into trouble. He had been hurried through a cheap grammar-school and into a London office, and discovered there that there was not much fun to be got in this world on two pounds a week. I had a frantic letter from him one day, saying that he must have a hundred at once or he would be ruined, and I went to Mark for the money. Only to borrow it, you understand; he gave me a good salary and I could have paid it back in three months. But no. He saw nothing for himself in it, I suppose—no applause, no admiration. Philip's gratitude would be to me, not to him. I begged; I threatened; we argued, and while we were arguing, Philip was arrested. It killed my mother—he was always her favorite—but Mark, as usual, got his satisfaction out of it. He preened himself on his judgment of character in having chosen me and not Philip twelve years before!

"Later on I apologized to Mark for the reckless things I had said to him, and he played the part of a magnanimous gentleman with his accustomed skill, but, though outwardly we were as before to each other, from that day forward, though his vanity would never let him see it, I was his bitterest enemy. If that had been all, I wonder if I should have killed him. To live on terms of intimate friendship with a man whom you hate is dangerous work for your friend. Because of his belief in me as his admiring and grateful protégé and his belief in himself as my benefactor, he was now utterly in my power. I could take my time and choose my opportunity. Perhaps I should not have killed him, but I had sworn to have my revenge—and there he was, poor, vain fool, at my mercy. I was in no hurry.

"TWO years later I had to reconsider my position, for my revenge was being taken out of my hands. Mark began to drink.

"I could not stop him, but I kept him within certain bounds, so that nobody but myself knew the secret. Yes; I kept him outwardly decent; and perhaps now I was becoming like the cannibal who keeps his victim in good condition for his own ends. I used to gloat over Mark, thinking how utterly he was mine to ruin as I pleased, financially, morally, whatever way would give me most satisfaction. I had but to take my hand away from him and he sank. But again I was in no hurry.

"Then he killed himself. That futile little drunkard, eaten up with his own selfishness and vanity, offered his beastliness to the truest and purest woman on this earth. You have seen her, Mr. Gillingham, but you never knew Mark Ablett. Even if he had not been a drunkard, there was no chance for her of happiness with him. I had known him for many years, but never once had I seen him moved by any generous emotion. To have lived with that shriveled little soul would have been hell for her, and a thousand times worse hell when he began to drink.

"So he had to be killed. I was the only one left to protect her, for her mother was in league with Mark to bring about her ruin. I would have shot him openly for her sake, and with what gladness, but I had no mind to sacrifice myself needlessly. He was in my power—I could persuade him to almost anything by flattery. Surely it would not be difficult to give his death the appearance of an accident.

"I need not take up your time by telling you of the many plans I made and rejected. And then he himself gave me the idea, he and Miss Norris between them, and to put himself in my hands—without risk of discovery, I should have said, had you not discovered me.

"We were talking about ghosts. Mark had been even more vain, pompous and absurd than usual, and I could see that Miss Norris was irritated by it. After dinner she suggested dressing up as a ghost and frightening him. I thought it my duty to warn her that Mark took any joke against himself badly, but she was determined to do it. I gave way reluctantly. Reluctantly, also, I told her the secret of the passage. There is an underground passage from the library to the bowling-green. You should exercise your ingenuity, Mr. Gillingham, in trying to discover it. Mark came upon it by accident a year ago. It was a godsend to him; he could drink there in greater secrecy. But he had to tell me about it. He wanted an audience, even for his vices.

"I told Miss Norris then, because it was necessary for my plan that Mark should be thoroughly frightened. Without the passage she could never have got close enough to the bowling-green to alarm him properly, but as I arranged it with her she made the most effective appearance, and Mark was in just the state of rage and vindictiveness which I required. Miss Norris, you understand, is a professional actress. I need not say that to her I appeared to be animated by no other feeling than a boyish desire to bring off a good joke—a joke directed as much against the others as against Mark.

"He came to me that night as I expected, still quivering with indignation. Miss Norris must never be asked to the house again—I was to make a special note of it—never again. It was outrageous. Had he not a reputation as a host to keep up, he would pack her off next morning. As it was, she could stay; hospitality demanded it, but never again would she come to the Red House—he was absolutely determined about that. I was to make a special note of it.

"I comforted him; I smoothed down his ruffled feathers. She had behaved very badly, but he was quite right; he must try not to show how much he disapproved of her. And of course she would never come again—that was obvious. And then suddenly I began to laugh. He looked up at me indignantly.

" 'Is there a joke?' he said coldly.

"I laughed gently again.

" 'I was just thinking,' I said, 'that it would be rather amusing if you—well, had your revenge.'

" 'My revenge? How do you mean?'

" 'Well, paid her back in her own coin.'

" 'Do you mean try and frighten her?'

" 'No, no; but dressed up and pulled her leg a bit. Made her look a fool in front of the others.' I laughed to myself again. 'Serve her jolly well right.'

"He jumped up excitedly.

" 'Splendid, Cay!' he cried. 'If I could! How? You must think of a way.'

"I don't know if Beverley has told you about Mark's acting. He was an amateur of all the arts and vain of his little talents, but as an actor he seemed to himself most wonderful. Certainly he had some ability for the stage, so long as he had the stage to himself and was playing to an audience. As a professional actor in a small part he would have been hopeless; as an amateur playing the leading part he deserved all that the local papers had ever said about him. And so the idea of giving us a private performance, directed against a professional actress who had made fun of him, appealed equally to his vanity and his desire for retaliation. If he, Mark Ablett, by his wonderful acting could make Ruth Norris look a fool in front of the others, could take her in and then join in the laugh at her afterward, he would indeed have had a worthy revenge.

"It strikes you as childish, Mr. Gillingham? Ah, you never knew Mark Ablett!

" 'How, Cay; how?' he said eagerly.

" 'Well, I haven't really thought it out,' I protested. 'It was just an idea.'

"He began to think it out for himself.

" 'I might pretend to be a manager, come down to see her—but I suppose she knows them all. What about an interviewer?'

" 'It's going to be difficult,' I said thoughtfully. 'You've got rather a characteristic face, you know. And your beard——'

" 'I'd shave it off,' he snapped.

" 'My dear Mark!'

"He looked away and mumbled: 'I've been thinking of taking it off, anyhow. And besides, if I'm going to do the thing, I'm going to do it properly.'

" 'Yes; you always were an artist,' I said, looking at him admiringly.

"He purred. To be called an artist was what he longed for most. Now I knew that I had him.

" 'All the same,' I went on, 'even without your beard and mustache, you might be recognizable. Unless, of course—' I broke off.

" 'Unless what?'

" 'You pretended to be Robert.' I began to laugh to myself again. 'Just the thing,' I said; 'that's not a bad idea. Pretend to be Robert, the wastrel brother, and make yourself objectionable to Miss Norris. Borrow money from her and that sort of thing.'

"He looked at me with his bright little eyes, nodding eagerly.

" 'Robert,' he said. 'Yes. How shall we work it?'

"There was really a Robert, Mr. Gillingham, as I have no doubt you and the inspector both discovered. And he was a wastrel and he went to Australia. But he never came to the Red House on Tuesday afternoon. He couldn't have, because he died (unlamented) three years ago. But there was nobody who knew this, save Mark and myself, for Mark was the only one of the family left, his sister having died last year. Though I doubt, anyhow, if she knew whether Robert was alive or dead. He was not talked about.

"FOR the next two days Mark and I worked out our plans. You understand by now that our aims were not identical. Mark's endeavor was that his deception should last for, say a couple of hours; mine that it should go to the grave with him. He had only to deceive Miss Norris and the other guests; I had to deceive the world. When he was dressed up as Robert, I was going to kill him. Robert would then be dead, Mark, of course, missing. What could anybody think but that Mark had killed Robert? But you see how important it was for Mark to enter fully into his latest and last impersonation. Half-measures would be fatal.

"You will say that it was impossible to do the thing thoroughly enough. I answer again that you never knew Mark. He was being what he wished most to be—an artist. No *Othello* ever blacked himself all over with such enthusiasm as did Mark. His beard was going, anyhow—possibly a chance remark of Miss Norbury's helped here. She did not like beards. But it was important for me that the dead man's hands should not be the hands of a manicured gentleman. Five minutes' playing upon the vanity of the artist settled his hands. He let his nails grow and then cut them raggedly. 'Miss Norris would notice your hands at once,' I had said. 'Besides, as an artist——'

"So with his underclothes. It was hardly necessary to warn him that his pants might show above the edge of his socks; as an artist he had already decided upon Robertian pants. I bought them, and other things, in London for him. Even if I had not cut out all trace of the maker's name, he would instinctively have done it. As an Australian and an artist, he could not have an East London address on his underclothes. Yes; we were doing the thing thoroughly, both of us—he as an artist, I as a—well, you may say, murderer, if you like. I shall not mind now.

"Our plans were settled. I went to London on the Monday and wrote him a letter from Robert. (The artistic touch again.) I also bought a revolver. On the Tuesday morning he announced the arrival of Robert at the breakfast-table. Robert was now alive—we had six witnesses to prove it, six witnesses who knew that he was coming that afternoon. Our private plan was that Robert should present himself at three o'clock, in readiness for the return of the golfing party shortly afterward. The maid would go to look for Mark and, having failed to find him, come back to the office to find me entertaining Robert in Mark's absence. I would explain that Mark must have gone out somewhere and would myself introduce the wastrel brother to the tea-table. Mark's absence would not excite any comment, for it would be generally felt—indeed, Robert would suggest it—that he had been afraid of meeting his brother. Then Robert would make himself amusingly offensive tc the guests, particularly, of course, Miss Norris, until he thought that the joke had gone far enough.

"That was our private plan. Perhaps I should say that it was Mark's private plan. My own was different.

"THE announcement at breakfast went well. After the golfing party had gone off, we had the morning in which to complete our arrangements. What I was chiefly concerned about was to establish as completely as possible the identity of Robert. For this reason, I suggested to him that, when dressed, he should go out by the secret passage to the bowling-green and come back by the drive, taking care to enter into conversation with the lodge-keeper. In this way I would have two more witnesses of Robert's arrival—first, the lodge-keeper and, second, one of the gardeners whom I would have working on the front lawn. Mark, of course, was willing enough. He could practise his Australian accent on the lodge-keeper. It was really amusing to see how readily he fell into every suggestion which I made. Never was a killing more carefully planned by its victim.

"He changed into Robert's clothes in the office bedroom. This was the safest way—for both of us. When he was ready, he called me in and I inspected him. It was extraordinary how well he looked the part. I suppose that the signs of his dissipation had already marked themselves on his face, but they had been concealed hitherto by his mustache and beard; for now that he was clean-shaved, they lay open to the world from which we had so carefully hidden them, and he was indeed the wastrel which he was pretending to be.

" 'By George, you're wonderful!' I said.

"He smirked and called my attention to the various artistic touches which I might have missed.

" 'Wonderful!' I said to myself again. 'Nobody could possibly guess.'

"I peered into the hall. It was empty. We hurried across to the library; he got into the passage and made off. I went back to the bedroom, collected all his discarded clothes, did them up in a bundle and returned with them to the passage. Then I sat down in the hall and waited.

"You heard the evidence of Stevens, the maid. As soon as she was on her way in search of Mark, I stepped into the office. My hand was in my side pocket and in my hand was the revolver.

"He began at once in his character of Robert—some rigmarole about working his passage over from Australia—a little private performance for my edification. Then in his natural voice, gloating over his well-planned retaliation on Miss Norris, he burst out: 'It's my turn now. You wait.' It was this which Elsie heard. She had no business to be there, and she might have ruined everything, but, as it turned out, it was the luckiest thing which could have happened. For it was the one piece of evidence which I wanted; evidence, other than my own, that Mark and Robert were in the room together.

"I said nothing. I was not going to take the risk of being heard to speak in that room. I just smiled at the poor little fool, and took out my revolver and shot him. Then I went back into the library and waited—just as I said in my evidence.

"Can you imagine, Mr. Gillingham, the shock which your sudden appearance gave me? Can you imagine the feelings of a murderer who has, as he thinks, planned every possibility and is then confronted suddenly with an utterly new problem? What difference would your coming make? I didn't know. Perhaps none; perhaps all. And I had forgotten to open the window!

"I DON'T know whether you will think my plan for killing Mark a clever one. Perhaps not. But if I do deserve any praise in the matter, I think I deserve it for the way I pulled myself together in the face of the unexpected catastrophe of your arrival. Yes; I got a window open, Mr. Gillingham, under your very nose—the right window, too, you were kind enough to say. And the keys—yes; that was clever of you, but I think I was cleverer. I deceived you over the keys, Mr. Gillingham, as I learned when I took the liberty of listening to a conversation on the bowling-green between you and your friend Beverley. Where was I? Ah, you must have a look for that secret passage, Mr. Gillingham.

"But what was I saying? Did I deceive you at all? You have found out the secret—that Robert was Mark—and that is all that matters. How have you found out? I shall never know now. Where did I go wrong? Perhaps you have been deceiving *me* all the time. Perhaps you knew about the keys, about the window, even about the secret passage. You are a clever man, Mr. Gillingham.

"I had Mark's clothes on my hands. I might have left them in the passage, but the secret of the passage was now out. Miss Norris knew it. That was the weak point of my plan, perhaps, that Miss Norris had to know it. So I hid them in the pond, the inspector having obligingly dragged it for me first. A couple of keys joined them, but I kept the revolver. Fortunate, wasn't it, Mr. Gillingham?

"I don't think that there is any more to tell you. This is a long letter, but, then, it is the last that I shall write. There was a time when I hoped that there might be a happy future for me, not at the Red House, not alone. Perhaps it was never more than an idle day-dream, for I am no more worthy of her than Mark was. But I could have made her happy, Mr. Gillingham. God, how I would have worked to make her happy! But now that is impossible. To offer her the hand of a murderer would be as bad as to offer her the hand of a drunkard. And Mark died for that. I saw her this morning. She was very sweet. It is a difficult world to understand.

"Well, well, we are all gone now—the Abletts and the Cayleys. I wonder what old grandfather Cayley thinks of it all. Perhaps it is as well that we have died out. Not that there was anything wrong with Sarah—except her temper. And she had the Ablett nose—you can't do much with that. I'm glad she had no children.

"Good-by, Mr. Gillingham. I'm sorry that your stay with us was not of a pleasanter nature, but you understand the difficulties in which I was placed. Don't let Bill think too badly of me. He is a good fellow; look after him. He will be surprised. The young are always surprised. And thank you for letting me end in my own way. I expect you did sympathize a little, you know. We might have been friends in another world—you and I, and I and she. Tell her what you like. Everything or nothing. You will know what is best. Good-by, Mr. Gillingham.

"Matthew Cayley.

"P. S.—I am lonely to-night without Mark. That's funny, isn't it?"

"GOOD Lord!" said Bill, as he put down the letter.

"I thought you'd say that," murmured Antony.

"Tony, do you mean to say that you knew all this?"

"I guessed some of it. I didn't quite know all of it, of course."

"Good Lord!" said Bill again, and returned to the letter. In a moment he was looking up again. "What did you write to him? Was that last night?"

"Yes."

"What did you say? That you'd discovered that Mark was Robert?"

"Yes. At least I said that this morning I should probably telegraph to Mr. Cartwright, of Wimpole Street, and ask him to——"

Bill burst in eagerly on the top of the sentence.

"Yes. Now, what was all that about? Why were you so secretive yesterday all of a sudden? We'd been doing the thing together all the time, and you'd been telling me everything, and then suddenly you became very mysterious and private, and talked enigmatically—is that the word?—about dentists and swimming and the Plough and Horses, and—well, what was it all about, Tony? You simply vanished out of sight; I didn't know what on earth we were talking about."

Antony laughed and apologized.

"Sorry, Bill. I felt like that suddenly. Just for the last half-hour—just to end up with. I'll tell you everything now. Not that there's anything to tell, really. It seems so easy when you know it—so obvious. About Mr. Cartwright, of Wimpole Street. Of course he was just to identify the body."

"But whatever made you think of a dentist for that?"

"Who could do it better? Could *you* have done it? How could you? You'd never gone bathing with Mark; you'd never seen him stripped. He didn't swim. Could his doctor do it? Not unless he'd had some particular operation, and perhaps not then. But his dentist could—at any time, always—if he had been to his dentist fairly often."

Bill nodded thoughtfully and went back again to the letter.

"I see. And you told Cayley that you were telegraphing to Cartwright to identify the body?"

"Yes. And then, of course, it was all up for him. Once we knew that Robert was Mark, we knew everything."

"How *did* you know?"

Antony got up from the breakfast-table and began to fill his pipe.

"I'm not sure that I can say, Bill. You know those problems in algebra where you say, 'Let x be the answer,' and then you work it out and find what x is. Well, that's one way; and another way, which they never give you any marks for at school, is to guess the answer. Suppose the answer is 4; will that satisfy all the conditions of the problem? No. Then try 6; and if 6 doesn't either, then what about 5? And so on. Well, the inspector and the coroner and all that lot had guessed their answer, and it seemed to fit; but you and I knew it didn't really fit. There were several conditions in the problem which it didn't fit at all. So we knew that their answer was wrong, and we had to think of another—an answer which explained all the things which were puzzling us. Well, I happened to guess the right one. Got a match?"

Bill handed him a box and he lit his pipe.

"Yes; but that doesn't quite do, old boy. Something must have put you on to it suddenly. By the way, I'll have my matches back, if you don't mind."

Antony laughed and took them out of his pocket.

"Sorry. Well then, let's see if I can go through my own mind again and tell you how I guessed it. First of all, the clothes."

"Yes?"

"To Cayley, the clothes seemed an enormously important clue. I didn't quite see why, but I did realize that to a man in Cayley's position the smallest clue would have an entirely disproportionate value. For some reason, then, Cayley attached this exaggerated importance to the clothes which Mark was wearing on that Tuesday morning—all the clothes, the inside ones as well as the outside ones. I didn't know why, but I did feel certain that, in that case, the absence of the collar was unintentional. In collecting the clothes, he had overlooked the collar. Why?"

"It was the one in the linen-basket?"

"Yes. It seemed probable. Why had Cayley put it there? The obvious answer was that he hadn't. Mark had put it there. I remembered what you told me about Mark being finicky, and having lots of clothes and so on, and I felt that he was just the sort of man who would never wear the same collar twice. Is that right, do you think?"

"Absolutely," said Bill, with conviction.

"Well, I guessed it was. So then I began to see an *x* which would fit just this part of the problem—the clothes part. I saw Mark changing his clothes; I saw him instinctively dropping the collar in the linen-basket, just as he had always dropped every collar he had ever taken off, but leaving the rest of the clothes on a chair in the ordinary way; and I saw Cayley collecting all the clothes afterward—all the visible clothes—and not realizing that the collar wasn't there."

"Go on," said Bill eagerly.

"WELL, I felt pretty sure about that, and I wanted an explanation of it. Why had Mark changed down there instead of in his bedroom? The only answer was that the fact of his changing had to be kept secret. When did he change? The only possible time was between lunch (when he would be seen by the servants) and the moment of Robert's arrival. And when did Cayley collect the clothes in a bundle? Again, the only answer was, 'Before Robert's arrival.' So another *x* was wanted—to fit those three conditions."

"And the answer was that a murder was intended, even before Robert arrived?"

"Yes. Well now, it couldn't be intended on the strength of that letter, unless there was very much more behind the letter than we knew. Nor was it possible a murder could be intended without any more preparation than the changing into a different suit in which to escape. The thing was too childish. Also, if Robert was to be murdred, why go out of the way to announce his existence to you all—even, at the cost of some trouble, to Miss Norbury? What did it all mean? I didn't know. But I began to feel now that Robert was an incident only, that the plot was a plot of Cayley's against Mark—either to get him to kill his brother or to get his brother to kill him—and that for some inexplicable reason Mark seemed to be lending himself to the plot." He was silent for a little, and then said, almost to himself, "I had seen the empty brandy bottles in that cupboard."

"You never said anything about them," complained Bill.

"I only saw them afterward. I was looking for the collar, you remember. They came back to me afterward; I knew how Cayley would feel about it. Poor devil!"

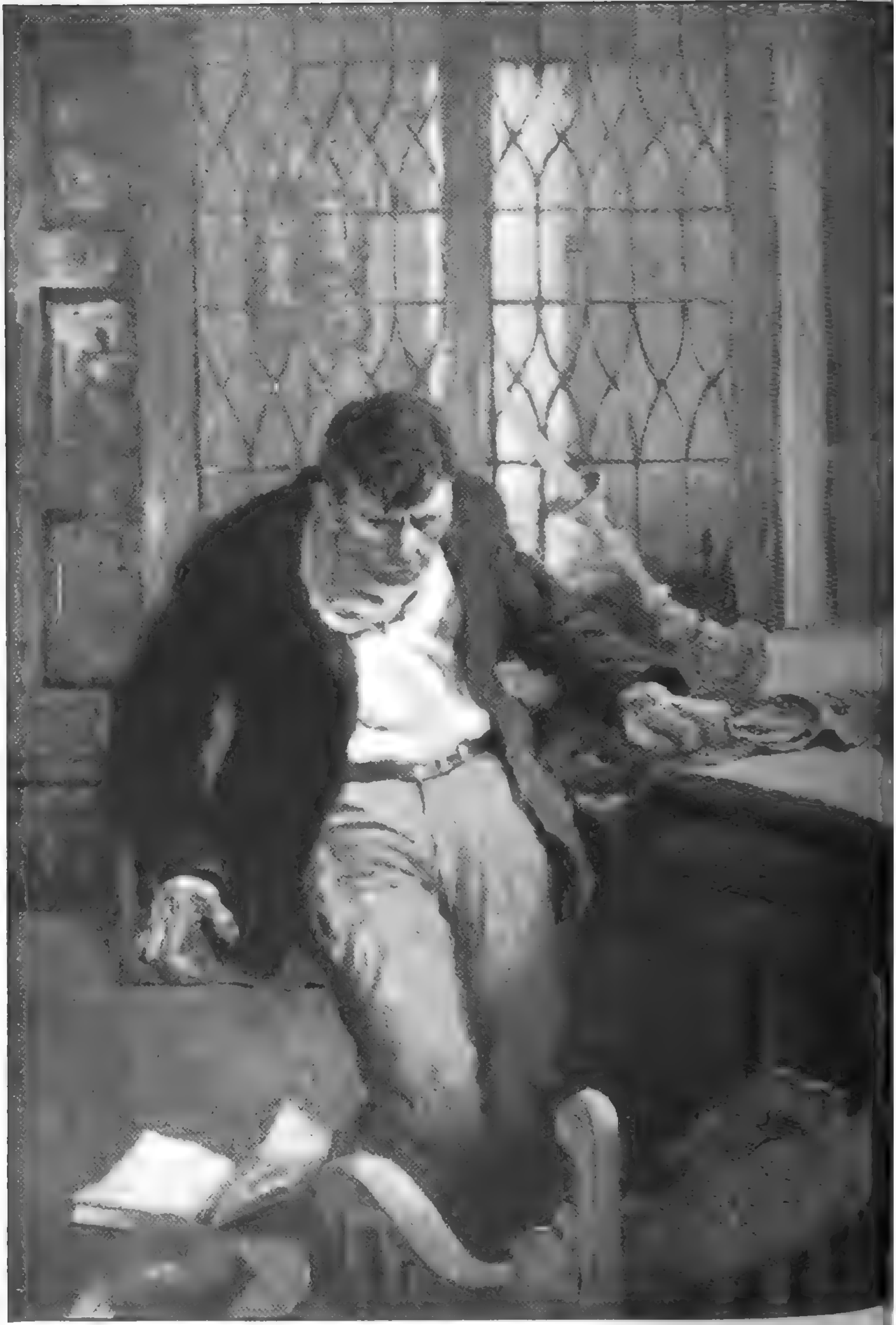
"Go on," said Bill.

"Well then, we had the inquest, and of course I noticed, and I suppose you did, too, the curious fact that Robert had asked his way at the second lodge and not at the first. So I talked to Amos and Parsons. That made it more curious. Amos told me that Robert had gone out of his way to speak to him, had called to him, in fact. Parsons told me that his wife was out in their little garden at the first lodge all the afternoon, and was certain that Robert had never come past it. He also told me that Cayley had put him on a job on the front lawn that afternoon. So I had another guess. Robert had used the secret passage—the passage which comes out into the park between the first and second lodges. Robert, then, had been in the house; it was a put-up job between Robert and Cayley. But how could Robert be there without Mark knowing? Obviously, Mark knew, too. What did it all mean?"

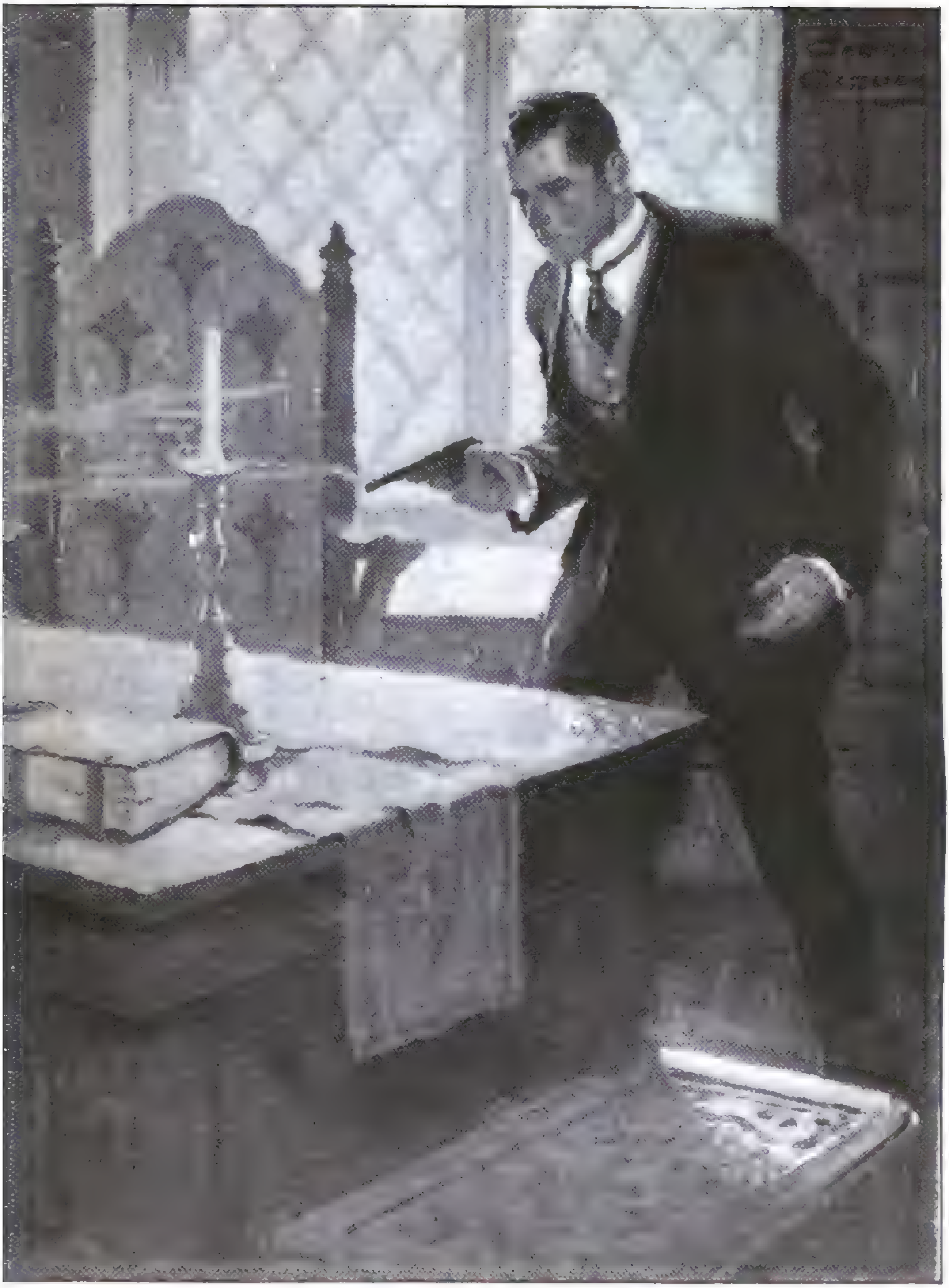
"When was this?" interrupted Bill. "Just after the inquest—after you'd seen Amos and Parsons, of course?"

"Yes. I got up and left them, and came to look for you. I'd got back to the clothes then. Why did Mark change his clothes so secretly? Disguise? But, then, what about his face? That was much more important than clothes. His face, his beard—he'd have to shave off his beard—and then—oh, idiot!—I saw you looking at that poster. Mark acting, Mark made up, Mark disguised. Oh, priceless idiot! Mark was Robert!"

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921



"I said nothing. I was not going to take the risk of being heard to speak i



oom. I just smiled at the poor little fool, and took out my revolver and shot him."

"Yes," said Bill thoughtfully. "Yes—But wait a moment. What about the Plough and Horses?"

Antony looked comically at him.

"You'll never forgive me, Bill," he said. "You'll never come clue-hunting with me again."

"What do you mean?"

Antony sighed.

"It was a fake, Dr. William. I wanted you out of the way. I wanted to be alone. I'd guessed at my x, and I wanted to test it—to test it every way, by everything we'd discovered. I simply *had* to be alone just then. So—" He smiled and added, "Well, I knew you wanted a drink."

"You *are* a devil," said Bill, staring at him. "And your interest when I told you that woman had been staying there——"

"Well, it was only polite to be interested when you'd taken so much trouble."

"You brute! And then you tried to steal my matches. Well, go on."

"That's all. My x fitted."

"Did you guess Miss Norris and all that?"

"Well, not quite. I didn't realize that Cayley had worked for it from the beginning—had put Miss Norris up to frightening Mark. I thought he'd just seized the opportunity."

BILL was silent for a long time. Then, puffing at his pipe, he said slowly,

"Has Cayley shot himself?"

Antony shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor devil!" said Bill. "It was decent of you to give him a chance. I'm glad you did."

"I couldn't help liking Cayley in a kind of way, you know."

"He's a clever devil. If you hadn't turned up just when you did, he would never have been found out."

"I wonder. It was ingenious, but it's often the ingenious thing which gets found out. The awkward thing from Cayley's point of view was that, though Mark was missing, neither he nor his body could be found. Well, that doesn't often happen with a missing man. He generally gets discovered in the end—a professional criminal, perhaps not—but an amateur like Mark! He might have kept the secret of *how* he killed Mark, but I think it would have become obvious sooner or later that he *had* killed him."

"Yes; there's something in that— Oh, just tell me one thing. Why did Mark tell Mrs. Norbury about his imaginary brother?"

"That's puzzled me rather, too, Bill. It may be that he was just doing the *Othello* business—painting himself black all over. I mean he may have been so full of his appearance as Robert that he had almost got to believe in Robert, and had to tell everybody. More likely, though, he felt that, having told all of you at the house, he had better tell Mrs. Norbury, in case she met one of you; in which case, if you mentioned the approaching arrival of Robert, she might say, 'Oh, I'm certain he has no brother; he would have told me if he had,' and so spoil his joke. Possibly, too, Cayley put him on to it; Cayley obviously wanted as many people as possible to know about Robert."

"Are you going to tell the police?"

"Yes; I suppose they'll have to know. Cayley may have left another confession. I hope he won't give me away; you see, I've been a sort of accessory since yesterday evening. And I must go and see Miss Norbury."

"I asked," explained Bill, "because I was wondering what I should say to—to Betty—Miss Calladine. You see, she's bound to ask."

"Perhaps you won't see her again for a long time," said Antony gravely.

"As a matter of fact, I happen to know that she will be at the Barringtons. And I go up there to-morrow."

"Well, you had better tell her. You're obviously longing to. Only, don't let her say anything for a day or two. I'll write to you."

Antony knocked the ashes out of his pipe and got up.

"The Barringtons," he said. "Large party?"

"Fairly, I think."

Antony smiled at his friend.

"Yes. Well, if any of 'em *should* happen to be murdered, you might send for me. I'm just getting into the swing of it."

THE END

The Magnificent Pompalone

Is the Western World Suffering from the Megalomania of Youth? Sounds Deadly, but It Isn't. Only the Subject is Serious—Not the Treatment

By T. S. Stribling

CHUM WONG LOO, a copra exporter in Tragarette Road down near the Carenage, told me this story one moonlit night on the savanna in Port au Spain. We were looking at an Italian villa built of Barbados chalk. It arose white, unbelievably white, in the moonlight, and was fronted by an overture of terraced gardens and an arpeggio of palms. It was in process of transformation, Loo told me, with a trace of satire in his voice. A brotherhood of monks had come into possession of it; they were changing the ballroom into a chapel, and already had removed the French landscapes and nudes with which it had been decorated and had replaced them with the fourteen stations done by a local Trinidad negro artist.

We perused this irony for several minutes with our eyes on the pallid villa and the harplike palms which were set with fireflies. Occasionally in front of us would pass Hindu or English or Syrian lovers, whispering together, oblivious of the night in the more melting wistfulness of their own hearts. As we sat musing, I could see Loo's flat Chinese face smiling in the moonlight with the faint condescension of a man who knows the catastrophe of some friend and is thinking how adroitly he could have avoided it had it happened to him. As this is one of the most pleasing meditations of the human heart, I kept silent, and presently Chum Wong began speaking again and drifted into an account of the man who built the villa, the Magnificent Pompalone.

He told it fragmentally, losing his sequence here and there, abridging lacunæ by moving ahead to the next clearly defined incident as men do when recalling a large body of fact. Through it all he preserved the faint satire of his Chinese superiority to the juvenilities of our Western civilization. We were all moonstruck, he said; the Western world suffered from the megalomania of youth. And then he instanced Pompalone. Why should Pompalone, an adventurer and a criminal out of the Orinoco delta, make the mad experiment of storming the careful English circle of Trinidad when he owned several million bolivars whose possession he could not explain?

I did not attempt to elucidate the point. I hold no brief either for the East or the West, or for any of the numberless countries whose nationals have drained into the human *olla podrida* of Trinidad. I know each country believes in its own heart that it is the finest and greatest of all. If it be a conquering country, its music is major; if it be one of the conquered, its songs are minor; to each singer his song is the sweetest of all.

Wong Loo remained in thought for a minute or two, and presently from some point in his meditation he proceeded:

"No doubt the profoundest surprise the Magnificent Pompalone ever received in his whole surprising life was when not one of his English guests appeared at the opening ball in the Pompalone palace. I say 'not one.' That is incorrect. A few dwellers on the social fringe did appear. Perhaps no one of importance thought it worth while to notify them of the boycott. A Mrs. Spence and her rather plain daughter, Mildred; a Mr. and Mrs. Tenahill and daughter—the Tenahills are manufacturers of rum in a small way down near San Fernando; a Major and a Miss Caroline Blivens—the major owns the bath-houses on Mariquepe beach, and, I believe, exists in a boarding-house—all dwellers of the fringe, with daughters. Just fancy such a handful in that Louis Quinze drawing-room! And even they couldn't stick it out.

"As soon as they realized they were a forlorn hope, they hurried round to Señor Pompalone to make their devoirs—they had just dropped in, don't you know, just to see the show—to pay their respects. What a magnificent place, and for a bachelor to live alone in it! And Major Blivens winked a watery eye at the nudes and said it was a good thing Trinidad's climate was always warm—great exhibition of English poise to jest in so anxious a situation—and they got themselves out into their little hired taxis waiting for them in the glare of the huge porte-cochère—they were so desperately afraid they had tumbled out of the fringe by accident. And when one does tumble out of the small and shining circle in Trinidad into the depths of the creams and yellows and chocolates and blacks, one is so irretrievably out, you know."

Chum Wong's almond eyes wrinkled with a faint interrogative smile.

"Well, everybody in Port au Spain knew of the ball. The town is as intimate as a village. The boulevard was full of the motors of wealthy Chinese and Persians and Syrians and Hindus, yellow folk of position who had not been invited; and every one saw them getting away almost surreptitiously.

"The Magnificent Pompalone, however, did not lose his face so easily as his guests. Straight in the teeth of that swarming boulevard, he kept the lights in his villa burning till two o'clock that night. The band played its entire program to the empty ballroom.

"The crowd of negroes who stood outside of the bronze railing peering in across the terraces said they could see the figure of Pompalone passing and repassing against the glare of his great windows, walking up and down, shoulders very erect, marching.

"At two o'clock in the morning he sent the musicians away; the lights blinked out in one room after another in the great white façade until only one dim glow was left high up in the third story, the millionaire's bedroom. Against this glow one negro swore he saw Pompalone's figure standing all night long, looking out over the savanna at the statues on his terraces washed in moonlight, at the old Anglican church with its illuminated clock-dial to the right, at the governor's house to the left, at the commonplace English homes around the boulevard—all simple places possessing not one-twentieth of the magnificence of the white villa, as any one can see—the negro swore that Pompalone stood looking out at them all night long.

"I BREAKFASTED with Cesar Pompalone a few mornings afterward. I say 'breakfasted.' I mean I took our Trinidad eleven-o'-clock meal, which is the nearest we get to what you Americans call 'lunch.'

"He sent for me because he knew that we Chinese are the most nearly respectable folk of all the races in Trinidad wearing the livery of the Sun. We are, you might say, the 'demis.' We tread a delicate path. Some of us marry white persons, some colored. We form a sort of link—a connection. Indeed, I have often thought if our first emperor, Han, eight thousand years ago, could have foreseen that his people, the Children of Heaven, would preserve themselves for eight millenniums in order to have the honor of forming a nexus between the black cannibals then gorging themselves on each other's flesh along the Congo and white sea-robbers, fighting and murdering, ravishing and tippling along the Baltic, I have often thought how gratified our first emperor would have been!" Wong Loo smiled and made a faint bow to the moonshine, then proceeded with the curious disconnection that marked his narrative.

"He was a youngish man, thick-necked, short-nosed, heavy-shouldered, with quick, slightly flushed eyes. And he wore his sun-helmet in the breakfast-room. However, the helmet appeared so natural that, for the first fifteen minutes, I really did not observe it. I simply had a feeling that something was wrong, and presently I discovered that Pompalone was wearing his sun-helmet. With it came an impression that at some turn of Pompalone's life he ate and slept and lived ready to fly, attack, resist or evade assault at any moment, and this sun-helmet at the breakfast-table was a kind of left-over from that insecure stage.

"He did not refer to his head-gear, and I certainly did not mention it, but talked of this and that to the short, powerful figure eating in the green-lined helmet.

"Pompalone listened well, and I found him interesting to talk to. About midway in our meal, he interrupted me to ask,

" 'I would like to know, Wong Loo, why no one came to my *baile*.'

"It was a question certainly which I had been expecting all along, and I had my answer pat.

" 'As you know, the English are very conservative, Señor Pompalone, and a new arrival like this——'

" 'I have had time to build this place—the artist took four months to do those tigers.' He motioned with his swizzle-stick at the ceiling of his breakfast-room, which had a jaguar done in tempera in each of the four corners.

" 'That's true,' I admitted; 'but four months or fourteen months is a short time for English acquaintance. Now, if you had cast your lot among the French or, better still, the Americans——'

"He looked at me with the slightly wine-shot eyes of the habitual moderate drinker.

" 'Wong Loo,' he said briefly, 'I asked you here to tell me why no guests came to my *baile*.'

"Somehow, Pompalone's look and manner jolted my explanation out of my mind in a most curious fashion, and yet I am not a man easily confused.

" 'They don't know how you made your millions, Señor Pompalone,' I said awkwardly.

" 'No?'

" 'And they say—in the clubs—that—you started your fortune on the Orinoco by—by——'

"He nodded me to go on, looking steadily at me.

" 'By killing an Englishman.' I moistened my lips with my brandy and soda and spilled a little.

"He nodded.

" 'That is correct. On the Kalayo sandbank; a balata boat had wrecked on it. We did not salve enough rubber to give us both a fortune; so I needed his.'

" 'Well—that's why.'

"Pompalone continued staring; then a short, involuntary laugh broke from him.

" '*Mio Dios*, they do draw fine lines!' He sat toying with the swizzle-stick, smiling and staring.

" 'WELL,' I said, more at ease, seeing him smile, 'as you know, the English take that sort of thing very seriously, in fact resentfully. Now, if you only had selected a Frenchman or an American or, better still, a Chinese—they don't mind you murdering their brothers——.'

"Pompalone laid down the swizzle-stick, rose and began walking up and down the mosaic floor.

" 'This may not be a very serious thing, Wong Loo,' he said, drawing down his lips in his queer smile, 'but it is not a thing to joke about, either. Now, here this damned Jerry Weck has bobbed up out of the Orinoco in the clubs of Trinidad, and he's disarranged my whole plans——'

"He stood frowning slightly, with the annoyed look of a man who has been stopped by a tire-puncture.

" 'May I ask what were your plans, *señor?*' I ventured curiously.

" 'Certainly,' he said bruskly. 'There is nothing in my life that I have any need to conceal. I wanted to marry an English girl, a fine-blooded English girl.' He turned and motioned a fist at me with an expository gesture. 'You see, Wong Loo, sudden wealth comes to a man with a question. It asks: What will you do with it? It opens up a hundred avenues, low and high. Will you dig on at your work like a beetle in a dunghill? Will you gamble and drink and play the Lothario? Will you waste your time in the lonely business of traveling for pleasure, and find all the real men in the world too busy to amuse you? Or will you go about the strange adventure of hunting out a great woman and founding a noble family, a memorable line, such as the Rothschilds or the Vanderbilts or the Astors—only, Wong Loo, I would not have my line so cold and mercantile as these. I would select some house back in the Middle Ages with a dash of something vivid in it—the Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent. Only, Wong Loo'—he paused, looking at me and through me—'there is something enormous and African in me, something vast and formidable, like Christophe's fort and palace in Haiti—gigantic—bizarre—tropical.' He stood with the sweat standing out on his face, staring. Presently he flung off his thought, walked to the table, lifted the damask and wiped his face and hands, wrinkling and soiling some square yard or so of the fabric.

"FOR some reason, Pompalone took a fancy to me. I was a sort of little Chinese peg upon which he hung his remarks. I became a kind of friend of the house and also, I must admit, a sort of majordomo. I am fond of the pipe occasionally, the Chinese pipe, I mean, and he allowed me to smoke in his palace, quite out of reach of the police, in a room high up in the fourth story of the villa." Chum Wong pointed through the moonlight. "It had been designed for a nursery and was painted all around with cockatoos and monkeys and dragons, and also with jaguars, all leaping and coursing through a jungle. It was done with a Futurist brilliance of color, and I would lie down on a couch and smoke and watch the cockatoos and dragons and jaguars go round and round, and I thought I was Pompalone sitting on a high throne and all the nations of the earth and all the animals were come to bow and kneel before me. It was terrible what I saw, the little yellow majordomo of the millionaire, lying on a couch in the nursery of his children yet to be."

Chum Wong Loo broke into lisping Chinese laughter and looked up, studying the flat face of the moon, and I had no idea whether he were laughing at himself or at Pompalone, or whether, by chance, at me.

Presently his mirth subsided, and he sat for several minutes brooding; then, with another abrupt dislocation, he pointed toward the mountains that rose up in the moonlight to the west of Port au Spain. Just in front of the mountains lay the dark sweep of the government botanical gardens, and a cluster of lights in this heavy wood represented the governor's palace. By dint of much pointing and directing where to look—over the tip of that palm, just to the right of that kalanga crest, and so, and so, until at last he pointed out the roof and flagstaff of a little observation-point barely visible in the wash of moonlight. He picked up his narrative again with his deplorable lack of coherence.

"She was sitting right up there with a book, a cool, blond girl, with a short blue walking-skirt, and over the end of the rather whittled bench she swung a pleasant curve of filmy blue hosiery and a little blue slipper. She gave Pompalone an impression of a slender bluebell with the dew on it. Against the end of the bench leaned her blue sunshade.

"As Pompalone came up, she quit reading and sat looking at him with her book in her lap and her finger in the book, precisely as if he were the leading figure in some sort of procession which she expected to see come winding out of the enormous tropical trees.

"The man from the Orinoco had never before been looked at so directly by any woman save those of one class, and he had never been regarded so impersonally by any woman in his life.

"It was not Pompalone's intention to entangle himself in an affair with howsoever pleasing a subject. He had come to the English colony with a fixed purpose, and such a course would interfere with it. So he walked on a little past the girl, and then stood with his back to observation-point, looking out over the city in the plain below. Beyond the city lay the harbor, and, westward from the harbor, a sweep of mountainous coast led to the Bocas del Dragones, a group of small islands through which vessels entered the Gulf of Paria from the Caribbean. Beyond the Bocas lay the mountains of Venezuela, rising like smoky amethyst out of an indigo sea.

"As Pompalone looked, a steamship came nosing between the Bocas. The Venezuelan stood watching the entrance when the girl behind him asked if he knew what ship that was.

"It was a casual question. The girl's English was crisper than Trinidad English, and held a faint nasality which Pompalone had never heard before.

"'I don't know, *señorita*,' he continued, standing and studying the noble scene before him.

"'Do you know whether it is a New York ship or not?'

"'No, *señorita*.'

"Her questions had been gathering interest slowly, and now she asked, with a distinct bid for personal service, 'Can't you make out the flags on the signal-tower?'

"The man from the Orinoco turned slightly and looked at the girl. She now had her book on her lap and was glancing at it in a leisurely way. She wore a faint smile on lips that were a warm pink rather than red. Her expression showed that she did not know her face was under observation at that moment. The Venezuelan became amused at her light impudence.

" 'I can make out the flags, *señorita*, but I don't know what they mean.'

"The girl marked her place and looked up with quite a new expression. 'Oh, I thought you were a native.' The spirit of this utterance was vaguely complimentary and held the sympathy of one fellow traveler for another. 'I'm glad you are not. No matter what country you go to, the natives, as a rule, are inclined to be rather stupid and uninteresting, don't you think?'

"Such a generalization surprised Pompalone into one of his peculiar warped laughs, and he began a swift reconstruction of his ideas about the young lady. He made another attempt to classify her. Her air and remark suggested that he had greatly overestimated her age.

" 'I don't know,' he said, with his smile. 'Every one must be a native from somewhere.'

SHE glanced away from the topic. 'I suppose you are traveling for some stupid commercial thing. We had an artist on the ship coming down from Guadelupe to Barbados—oh, I thought he was just wonderful! I suppose you find the food at the hotels very trying?'

" 'Why, no-o-o,' said Pompalone, utterly at sea between the girl and her piling-up list of questions. 'No; I'm not, and I don't.'

" 'Do you mean commercial or underfed?'

" 'Why, neither one.'

" 'Oh, you're not?'

" 'No.'

" 'Oh, you don't mean you're an artist, too!'

"She was clearly younger than he had thought.

" 'Oh, no; I am no kind of an artist at all.'

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1921

"The girl narrowed her blue eyes for a more careful estimate.

" 'You don't look like a man in the diplomatic service,' she ventured.

"Her light curiosity pleased Pompalone in an odd way. She had the ingenuous curiosity of a boy, with an unconscious suggestion of cool sweetnesses that belong only to blond women.

" 'No,' he said invitingly; 'I am not a diplomat, either—I don't look a diplomat?'

" 'Oh, no—no!' Her negative was unflatteringly frank. 'What is your country?'

" 'Right over there.' He pointed to the amethyst headland.

"She was illuminated at once.

" 'Oh, Venezuela—you're a Venezuelan! Oh, you're a bull-fighter! You look exactly like a bull-fighter!' She clapped her hands and began jiggling delightedly up and down.

"There was something provocative in the ripeness of her childish movement. The man from the Orinoco stopped a breath half-way, looking at her.

" 'Why, no!' He grew suddenly grave. 'I'm not a bull-fighter, either.'

"She was obviously disappointed. She studied him a moment longer.

" 'Then I give you up.'

" 'What do you mean by giving me up?'

" 'You'll have to tell me what you are. I can't guess.'

"Her assumption that he was a riddle placed there for her entertainment somehow pleased Pompalone. He had never before been in the rôle of entertainer for a woman. He had sought some, he had bought many; but this was an experience delightful and unique.

" 'I came over here—' he began, and his voice trailed as he pondered just how to state his mission.

" 'Yes—what for?'

" 'To pick a wife.'

"The girl came to a momentary stillness; a faint pink came into her face, but she continued looking steadily at him.

" 'Now, that is the Spanish flattery in you.' She was clearly disappointed and a little hurt. 'I've read about that in books. They say they never get friends. Instead of being nice and comfy, they slide off into silly compliments. And so there is no real friendship between men and women in South America—' She shook her head sadly, and her blue eyes seemed not far from tears over the great impersonal pathos of such a condition.

" 'That was not flattery,' said Pompalone dryly; 'it was not even personal. It was a mere statement of fact, *señorita*.'

"The girl glanced down at her book, then back at Pompalone. In the interval she had recovered from her melancholy over Spanish lack of sincerity between the sexes.

" 'Haven't you any girls in Venezuela?' she asked brightly.

" 'Yes; but I wanted an English girl,' explained Pompalone, with a certain clumsiness of truth.

" 'What English girl—here in Port au Spain?'

" 'No; an English girl, some English girl.'

"His inquisitor was amazed.

" 'Why-y-y?'

"Pompalone hesitated. He did not like to introduce the topic of children to this young lady. He had decided that she was not the woman he had thought her, and now he was exceedingly anxious for his conversation not to offend. He felt as he had felt one day in the Orinoco jungle, as he stood very motionless so as not to frighten a fawn at play. However, she was obviously waiting for him to explain why he wanted to marry an English girl, and he could conjure up no other reason than the real one.

" '*Señorita*,' he said at last, 'it sounds rather foolish to say it, because, after all'—he stood considering—'after all, a man is but a partner—perhaps not the major partner—indeed, it is a very strange thing, *señorita*, that we stand here and look up at these trees in the sunlight; they drop their seeds in the ground; young trees grow up, precisely alike, not a flaw's difference; but man'—Pompalone tapped his chest—'although that is the very dearest thing he can set his heart on—it will never be. He can never project his very self through the sunshine of the days yet to come, *señorita*. There must be a change. His children will look upon the world with other eyes than his, weave other hopes and plans, and all his own fond imaginings, *señorita*, fade like a mist, and are lost utterly in a burning succession of endless days.'

"The girl stared.

" 'Whatever are you talking about, Mr.—' She trilled off into a laugh. 'Dear me! Here I am chattering away to a man whose name I don't even know!'

" 'Pompalone, *señorita*.'

" 'Pompalone—well, mine's Kelvey—Prudence Kelvey.' She extended a slender white hand and gave the man from the Orinoco a brief, cordial grip. 'Glad to meet you. Now, what was it you were saying?'

"A CERTAIN humor of situation struck Pompalone that he should be shaking hands with a girl in this masculine fashion and telling her what sort of children he wanted. He gave his queer down-drawn smile.

" 'I wanted to marry an English girl and found a great family, *señorita*,' he explained.

" 'But why English?' she asked.

" 'Because the English seem to cling to one purpose better than other people. Usually it is a small purpose—a bank, perhaps, or a cacao plantation or a ranch, but they cling to it, "what they have they hold;" and all of their small purposes put together make an empire.'

"The bluebell was listening intently now, nodding her blond head thoughtfully.

" 'So I thought if I could marry an English girl, *señorita*, and have by her children holding some immense purpose—a great Latin purpose, held with English tenacity'—the Venezuelan kindled unconsciously at his thought—'why, then I could transmit myself in a great family, *señorita*. I would found a second House of de' Medici. This heart of mine would beat through centuries'—he struck his chest—'changed, perhaps, but brave and strong and ruthless—I should live!'

" 'Why, yes,' defined Miss Kelvey, with frank admiration in her blue eyes; 'that's eugenics. I majored in that.'

" 'And I hate death, *señorita! Mio Dios!* To be struggling one minute in the water, beating, shrieking, and the next moment a limp sack of hide yourself! Ugh! And yet it is an end every man reaches somehow or another, *señorita*, unless he finds immortality in brave sons. Unless a fleck of him marches on and on, through centuries——'

" 'Oh, that's exactly what Professor Reed said!' cried Miss Prudence, clapping her hands and jiggling again. 'Oh, he was the handsomest man! He was our lecturer in eugenics. "Immortality through our children;" that was what he was always saying.

Oh, he was the rage with our senior class! All the girls were just crazy about him. His lectures were so inspiring! And all of us girls meant to do something about it, really, although one of us, Myrtle Shaw, has gone and got married to a grocer, a boy, to my certain knowledge, who never had but one inspiration in all his life, and that was Myrtle——'

"Here the bluebell rippled away in laughter without restraint at Miss Shaw's *faux pas*, but she indicated by her mirth that she and the rest of the seniors were holding fast to their celibacy in the interest of eugenics.

"Miss Prudence was frankly delighted at meeting a fellow enthusiast in the wilds of Trinidad. She bade Pompalone sit down beside her, and she chattered away about Mendelism and birth-control, and the maternal period, and the time for bearing the strongest children—Miss Kelvey had majored in eugenics.

"Her talk was punctuated with 'Oh's' and sprinkled with quotations from Professor Reed; and her discourse tripped along as if she were some sort of disembodied intelligence which had left the human machinery for this highly experimental science, somewhere back at her college, securely packed in sawdust, which she meant to resurrect whenever she got married and put her theories to the test.

"The man from the Orinoco lost all his moorings. Her amazing chatter sometimes provoked him right to the verge of seizing this provocative delight in his arms, of kissing her cool pink lips violently. What topics she prattled of! The man's heart pounded so that, at every stroke, the girl and the forest and the offing seemed to vibrate. They beat before his eyes in tune to the violence in his veins.

"And yet her sheer effervescence, her little 'Oh's' and amazing quotations from Professor Reed, her delighted childish jigglings up and down, her absurd *camaraderie*, her certitude that Pompalone also had left machinery somewhere packed in sawdust— The man from the Orinoco sat staring and listening and trembling.

"She said she sure wanted to talk to Mr. Pompalone some more, and set an hour to meet him in the same place the next afternoon. She shook hands warmly at parting, and Pompalone weathered his last stone-age impulse. He watched her as she spread her cool blue parasol and walked away on the wobbly heels of her blue slippers. As she passed round a curve in the path that would take her out of sight, she turned and gave him the friendliest smile and a wave of a bit of blue lace and cambric.

"She left Pompalone dazed. He stood bewildered at his own amazing quiescence. The jungle about him exhaled its strong musky perfumes, and the sight of a frond of blue lilylike flowers hanging from a tree almost drove the man mad. As he walked to the savanna through the huge trees, the pulse in his ears throbbed, 'To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow.'"

CAME a long pause; the copra dealer sat smiling in the moonlight, an unchanging satiric Chinese mask. After a while he continued in a leisurely manner:

"I must admit I never spent so uncomfortable a night as that one following Pompalone's adventure with the blue girl. He rang me up to his great bedroom, and I sat on a white-leather couch, now half asleep, now fully awake, as he strode up and down the crimson carpet and talked or swore or muttered or ordered me to do this or that. At one moment he would say: 'No; this is an end! I won't go back!' At another he would seize my shoulder and order: 'Wong Loo, get the fastest motorboat in the Port au Spain. I will want to escape to the delta to-morrow—fast! I swear I will, by the Virgin!'

"Ten minutes later he would break out: '*Mio Dios*, Wong Loo, such innocence, such purity! I will tell her everything—all about that sand-bank on the Orinoco! How I worked in the flues of hell! How I killed Weck! Why, what good would he have been alive?' he would storm at me. 'He would have swilled his part away in the Caracas brothels. And I needed his part, Wong Loo. I always had it in mind to found a great house, to be a great man!'

"Sweat poured from him. His pajamas clung to the moldings of his back and chest; and then he would break out: 'Oh, damn it! Damn it! She is so cool and blue and slender—' And the veins of his neck were like vines laced round a tree-trunk.

"I must say, sir, when I saw my friend and patron drive his motor to the botanical gardens the next afternoon, I had not the least idea whether by sunset the white villa would have a new mistress or lose a master."

"You see, I really had bought a speed-launch that morning as Pompalone had directed. It lay in the harbor at the foot of the botanical gardens, manned by three St. Kitts niggers—black boys who would risk their necks for Pompalone—or cut his throat, so long as they were paid for the job.

"I took a pair of binoculars and climbed four flights of stairs to the observation-tower that's on top of the villa. I was so nervous I could hardly focus the glasses, sir. And then, when I got them right, the tops of the jungle-trees jumped about so I had a miserable fear that I should never see him at all. And then, suddenly, there he was, right in my field.

"HE WAS alone, walking up and down before the little observation-point, and I could see him stopping and listening and peering into the jungle. He was continually moistening his lips, taking long breaths and blowing them out.

"All sorts of things went through his mind. He would tell the girl about Weck, about his outlawed palace; he would explain that he came by his wealth partly by craft, partly by oil concessions wrung from the Venezuelan dictator by threats of a revolution, partly by trade, partly by pillage. But he would explain that through it all he had kept the great purpose in view—to found a great family, to breed a great foal from a great dam; and they whom he had robbed were small crawling men without a purpose. And then he would ask her to go with him to the racing motor in the boulevard, ride to the government offices and be married to him. And if she refused— If she refused, he would not repeat the madness of yesterday. He would pick her up bodily, get down through the jungle with her to the speed-boat and the St. Kitts niggers, and he would escape to the delta.

"The thought of picking her up bodily started a kind of burning in Pompalone's veins. And then a strange hue came over his purpose.

"He thought what an absurd thing it was to ask any woman's consent. '*Mio Dios!*' he thought. 'Men are molded of iron, huge and strong, and women are weak and soft and slender. And the One Who Knows and Plans All must have meant for men to play the man, instead of going about asking and pleading and begging.

"It was the strangest fancy, but it stuck in Pompalone's head and grew and grew until it seemed to him he was about to commit some sort of outrage against nature to ask the cool blue girl to marry him, to escort her before some mouthing official and have him write and say ceremonies over this tingling intimate matter.

"The thought of picking her up, of gripping her to his breast as he skirted down the jungle to his speed-boat, grew in Pompalone's veins like raw rum. Why, for a million years men had taken their women like that! Only in the last few centuries have they asked them, and talked and explained and argued—like street vendors quibbling over a penny! Oh, it was shameful! There is something quivering with shame when a man asks a woman's consent to marriage! It is a blasphemy toward God!

"And just when Pompalone perceived this strange truth, he heard a rattle of pebbles round the curve in the path. The Orinoco millionaire made three steps and was behind the buttress of a huge ceiba tree. His nerves were like a tuned violin. There flickered through his head the course of his flight through the rank jungle. And the steps came around the turn.

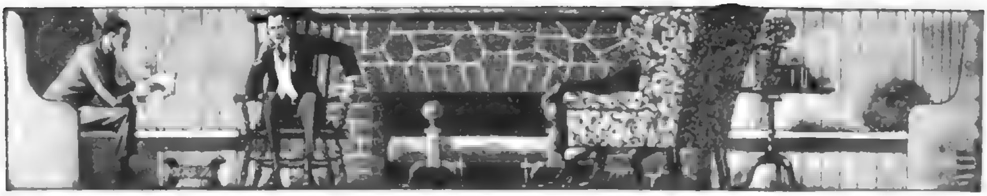
"It was a little negro boy with a letter. It was directed to 'Mr. Pompalone' in the tall, straggling, almost illegible handwriting of an American college-girl. It ran:

"DEAR MR. POMPALONE:

"I am so sorry I can not keep my appointment with you. I was so interested in you and your high ideels. I was all ready just crazy about Venizweela, and now I am so interested in the Venizweelans. I had no idea they were so up to date and progressive, and in touch with the noblest advances of human science and asperation.

"And I do hope and pray, dear Mr. Pompalone, that you will meet some nobel woman who is worthy to become a mother to the nobel children I know you are sure to produce. With every good wish for the betterment of humanity, I am always your sincere freind, PRUDENCE KELVEY.

"P. S.—The ship we saw come in was my ship after all. I sail for New York at nine this morning, or I would certainly be with you when you read these lines. P. K."



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

AMONG letters which say, "Your magazine in the new form is better than it was formerly," and "There is stuff in EVERYBODY'S which shows selection with a purpose," we receive an occasional criticism to this effect: "I miss the feature articles. I don't quite approve of an all-fiction magazine; one gets tired of being only amused."

We have always had the belief, without looking for specific examples, that good fiction did more than entertain. We have always believed that from good fiction one obtained valuable knowledge and thought-stimulant. Take as an example a few sentences chosen at random from the fiction in this number.

From "Foraker's Folly"—"We have only a fifty-year cut of virgin timber left in this country. Trees are second only in importance to food. What are we going to do when they are gone?"

Certainly this is important information.

From "Seba Dines"—"Snakes are very careful what they touch. Snakes never show anything except hate. Too full to get away, the giant serpents were covered with ants. The ants won in the end—as they always do."

Interesting, if not so important.

From "Sacrifice"—"These people who kill one another, and even themselves, for love exist, of course, but to me they are ridiculous. There are too many other things in life."

From "Breaking the Blue Roan"—"The love that endures is a thing of the mind, intangible and permanent, and based on the irresistible attraction of soul to soul and not of body to body."

Food for thought in both quotations.

From "Shagan"—"There's this advantage in being a great criminal," says Shagan; "you prove that great criminals aren't any different from other men." His auditor replies: "In dreams we are all alike, but the criminal, like the genius, puts his dream into action. Only, the actions differ. You might have written a play on murder, as Shakespeare did, instead of committing murder. . . . By what fate is one a criminal and another not?"

Something to think about.

Perhaps some of the readers of EVERYBODY'S will care to continue this discussion by giving examples of what they have gained by reading good fiction.

MARJORIE L. C. PICKTHALL, who will join EVERYBODY'S family of authors in January with a novelette entitled "The Bridge," was born in England, but emigrated to Canada at an early age.

I began to write verse at an early age, too (she says). One quatrain from this period survives—"The Cook's Complaint."

"I know it's wrong to grumble,
But yet it does seem hard
To want to make an apple pie
And not to have no lard."

I was educated in Toronto, and lived there until I went to England nine years ago. During the war I worked on the land, striving to make three lettuces grow in place of the proverbial blade of grass; but the grass had the best of it. Last year I came out to British Columbia, and have no desire to leave it in a hurry. Wandering is my recreation, and the West Coast affords unrivaled opportunities for it. I must have a strong mind, because I have not yet bought any real estate; or perhaps it's a thin purse. I am awfully fond of Masefield's books, bull-terriers and caramel ice-cream; and I love reading about myself.

ANOTHER author in January, better known to EVERYBODY'S readers, is William Ashley Anderson, with a story called, "The Desert Decides." Mr. Anderson has been a great traveler, and Fate has been kind in throwing him where there was action. He says:

Since 1911, when I went to China on business, and arrived in time to be caught in the crash of the old empire, I have spent most of my time abroad, and have gone round the world a couple of times. Following the establishment of the Chinese republic, I lived in Mongolia during the struggle of that province for autonomy. In 1916, I was in Abyssinia at the crisis of the very remarkable and bloody civil war in that empire. Later, I served as an officer in the King's African Rifles in East Africa, and in 1918 secured a transfer to France, where I was appointed captain of infantry in the American army, and in which I continue as a reserve officer.

In current fiction I find that the hero must never know death—except, perhaps, how to inflict it—whereas in actuality it often crowns the heroism of a man, and makes him great. *En passant*, may I remark that there's many a veteran who would rather have died leading a charge than live to languish on a park bench, a defeated bum?

I believe the essence of a full life is this: To live it cheerfully and cleanly—yet charitably; to experience unselfish love; to stand in awe of no man—yet, courteously and always, to be willing to die for a worthy ideal.

THERE is a wonderfully interesting picture of the growth of a mind in what Sampson Raphaelson, whose story, "The Day of Atonement," will appear in January, says about himself. He was born on the East Side in New York, attended the University of Illinois, "and am now, four years after graduation, getting the first stirrings of education." He continues:

I take myself with terrific earnestness, and, when I was in advertising work, I believed that it was the epic life, just as I felt that being an assistant editor, when I was one, was the most momentous thing in all existence. Similarly when, a year and a half ago, I left Chicago for the Pacific coast to do nothing but write short stories, I felt that travel and leisure were the natural privileges and the sum total of existence for all Superior Persons.

And now he passes another mile-stone:

I have begun to read Homer and Plato and Dante and Shakespeare and Horace and Molière and Goethe and Hazen's "Europe Since 1815," and altogether they have given me the feeling that I am not so confoundedly important, and that taking many other things lightly renders life more seemly; so now I am engaged with tremendous earnestness in taking things lightly.

He passes to another stage:

I may say, however, that I have suffered more intensely than most of my friends from a desire to "live," that I have not been able to gratify that desire, and that yesterday—or was it the day before?—I suddenly discovered that to wish intensely to "live" and to suffer the denial of that desire *is* living, and that when one gets an infinitesimal distance out of oneself and sees this, one is just naturally going to write, or paint, or talk, or play a harmonica, or do one of the various other blessedly "useless" things which are the only things under the sun worth doing.

A WRITER who carries his fourscore years lightly said recently that only at the age of sixty do we know how to make the best of life—only at sixty do we really know the pleasure, for instance, of helping others. If this is true, then we should begin a "know-life-earlier" campaign; we should learn earlier the supreme pleasure of doing for others. And a good way to begin is by assisting the Red Cross, which is now in the midst of a drive for new members.

The most important work of the Red Cross is caring for and solving the problems of the disabled ex-service man. Last year it spent approximately ten million dollars, or nearly four million more than the total receipts from membership dues, in aiding disabled Great War veterans and their families. Unless the membership is increased, Red Cross operations must be curtailed. Curtailment of Red Cross operations will mean further neglect (it is bad enough now) of needy ex-service men.

The government, of course, provides medical and nursing service, but here are some of the things provided by the Red Cross:

In all hospitals where disabled soldiers are treated, it provides convalescent comforts, recreation, whatever can be done to lighten the burden of hospital life.

It gets in touch with the individual, finds out his condition and problems, and opens the way for government aid and compensation.

It looks after the men whose disabilities are just beginning to develop, and they are instructed as to how to file proper papers to obtain government help. It provides care for their families until government compensation is granted.

And in addition to its work for ex-service men, the Red Cross continues its nursing service, its disaster relief, and its assistance to the needy in Europe. It is against the law to vote more than once, but it isn't against the law to join the Red Cross more than once. Join early and often.

SEWELL HAGGARD.

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

(Atlanta Constitution)

Reliable chauffeur. Willing to work family or firm. Call Main 5144-J.

As usual.

(Atlanta Constitution)

Gladys, Duchess of Marlborough, Walking With Her Husband From the Paris Scottish Church After Her Marriage to an Open-Air Reception.

Playing safe.

(Mexico Post)

The gathering-up and destruction of all dead animals found running at large is another matter that should receive the attention of the Health Department. All of these things have to do with making the city an attractive place in which to live.

Provided, of course, that you can hold your nose long enough.

(Woodland, Mich., News)

John Mundy and Stella Friday were married last Saturday by Rev. Sunday. They will leave Tuesday for Eaton Rapids and be back Wednesday or Thursday.

Week-ended.

(On a movie bill-board)

Take It From Me.

Well, seems though everybody *has* been.

(Fond du Lac Reporter)

Purchases Parlor—C. A. Randall, of Oakfield, has purchased the Burns ice-cream parlor in that village from Mrs. J. Burns. He will move his farm-implements to the new location.

Come into the parlor, Maud.

(Sign on Cleveland theatre)

Closed for the Summer. Open in August.

S'all right, if you know Cleveland.

(Coffeyville, Kan., Journal)

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Byrd, of Cherryvale, spent the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Crow on the latter's farm near Nowata, Okla.

B. of a f., etc.

(Ottawa Journal)

Manchester-Cowan—At Dominion Methodist Church, Ottawa, by Rev. W. T. G. Brown, Mrs. Alisha Cowan, of Ottawa, to Mr. David Manchester, of Huntley. Both left for Toronto, Niagara and other parts of the West.

What! Together?

(Osage, Ia., News)

Mrs. Charles Iches went to Charles City yesterday to spend the afternoon with friends.

And she just had to scratch to make the train.

(Note received by dear teacher)

Mary's stomach was off, and I kept her home for two days.

It's hard to get one that will fit nowadays.

(Twin Butte, Mont., Miner)

It is in keeping with the old cry that has come down the centuries: "Le roy est mort! Vive le roy."

Roy? Roy? Oh, yes; sure I know him.

(Taunton, Mass., Gazette)

Girls Wanted. Baer and Wild.

Police!

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(Belvidere, Ill., Republican)

Fred Lewis, of the Hotel Belvidere barber shop, sang three times at the Soldiers' Club at Rockford last evening. Many of the patrons of the club are men from overseas, accustomed to all kinds of hardships.

It's an ill shell-shock that does nobody any good.

(Ipava Lance)

Card of Thanks—We wish to heartily thank Dr. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. L. Klain, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and brother for the kindness, patience, courtesy and willingness to help shown on last Tuesday at the birth of our son—Mr. and Mrs. William Glogas.

Boy, go out and get that song: "Everybody Worked but Father."

(Twenty years ago, in Weyauwega, Wisc., Chronicle)

Ed Gerlach injured himself quite severely with a fork yesterday.

Or, as the waitress in a Sheboygan café said, "Some one will have to use this fork; all the knives are gone."

(Lonsdale, Minn., Item)

Mike Sirek, blacksmith, had the misfortune to get two fingers of his right hand caught in the planer last Tuesday. They were so badly crushed that Dr. Lexa was obliged to amputate them both just near the first joint, taking off the ends.

Ain't surgery just wonderful!

(Sat. Eve. Post)

The rain descended in sheets and spouted, through a ripped seam in the canvas just overhead, and ran in a stream down the back of his neck and chilled his ardor and everything.

Distressing!

(Hudson, Ia., Herald)

He was brought to a physician and had a couple badly smashed fingers as the result.

But you oughta see Doc.

(Chicago Law Bulletin)

"B. 36023 M. Jones v. Sousie Jones bill for divorce.

She wouldn't give him any.

(On gashouse gate, Menominee, Wisc.)

No Admittance. Keep out. This means you. Who, me? Yes; you. Beat it.

I wonder if visitors would be allowed!

(Ludington, Mich., News)

Wanted—A young experienced woman. For matrimony. No references are necessary. My age 31. Anderson, Freesoil, Mich.

It takes so long to train 'em nowadays.

(FROM *EVERYBODY'S* READERS)

(Salina, Kan., Journal)

Peterson-Griffin

Miss Irene Jennie Peterson and
Salina were married at Abilene on
Mr. James Andrew Griffen both of
Saturday morning. (H. M. R.)

Oh, well, if you want to set the type that way.

(Lancaster, Pa., Examiner-New Era)

Notice—Mabel B. Horner having left my bed and board, I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by her. C. M. Horner.

Notice—I left his father's board. One of my beds he sold, and the other I took with me. Mrs. C. M. Horner. (W. H. K.)

Litter-ally!

(Fargo, N. D., Forum)

Wanted—Woman to come in few hours each day for cleaning. Prescott Hotel. (REV. A. H. C.)

Why not make it a full day, and finish the job?

(Washington Post)

Respectable cat and three kittens want good home. Phone Col. 6508-W. (W. H. T.)

But will she promise to stay in nights?

(Wehling Post)

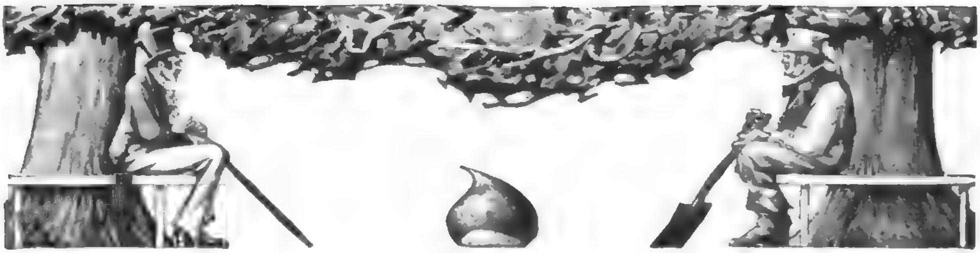
Nellie, 15, a daughter, was near scalped, practically all of the skirt having been torn loose. (G. E. F.)

Wearing 'em high in Neb.

(New Hamburg, Ont., Independent)

A very pleasant visit was made at the writer's home the other Sunday, when our New Hamburg printers, Ritz Bros., accompanied by a few others, called on the scribe. Kindly call again.
There are times when our heart is dreary,
But when true friends will call sunshine will appear,
And as they came with joy and happiness
Our heart gets free of worry,
And we are again filled with courage without fear.
(O. H.)

Vers libre in the tall grass.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

MR. BUDGER and his wife were continually at variance regarding their individual capabilities of making and keeping a good fire. He contended that she did not know how to make a fire, or how to keep one after it was made. She, on the other hand, maintained that he never meddled with the fire that he didn't put it out—in short, that he was a regular fire-damper; and, as he was always anxious to stir up things in the various fireplaces, she made it a practise of hiding the poker just before it was time for him to come into the house. One night there was an alarm of fire in the village, and Budger flew for his hat and coat.

"Where are you going?" asked the wife.

"Why, there's a fire, and I'm going to help put it out."

"Well, my love," responded Mrs. Badger, "I think the best thing you can do is to take the poker with you."

MANUEL, a negro with a record hitherto clean, was arraigned before a country justice of the peace for assault and battery.

"Why did you beat this man up, Manuel?" questioned the squire.

"He called me sumpin', Jedge."

"What did he call you?"

"He called me a rhinoceros, sah—a rhinoceros!"

"A rhinoceros! When did this occur?"

" 'Bout three year 'go, Jedge."

"Three years ago! Then how did it happen that you waited so long to resent it?"

"Lord, Jedge; I ain't never seen no rhinoceros till dis mawnin'!"

TWO Hibernian ladies stopped to chat in the village street, and one of them presently began on the topic of her young son.

"Shure my Tommy's the fine boy, Mrs. Casey, and a great comfort to me—he's that handy about the house. Phwat d'ye tink he did yisterday?"

"I dunno, Mrs. Ryan. Phwat did he do?"

"The cuckoo-clock was broke, and he fixed it."

"Well now, isn't he the smart lad! And does it go now?"

"It does that, Mrs. Casey. Only, it 'oo's' before it 'cucks.' "

MOTHER had to reprove Betty for some rudeness to grandmother, and said gravely,

"Betty, I want you to understand that your gran'ma is my mother; so you must obey her just as you would me."

But Betty did not mend her ways. Wills clashed, and gran'ma wielded a firm, old-fashioned hand.

Betty fled sobbing to her mother.

"Oh, mother, mother! I ain't a-going to fool with your mother no more!"

CHARLES M. FLOYD, when he was governor of New Hampshire, lost Colonel Ward, of his staff, and there was an unseemly scramble for the office, even while the colonel's body was awaiting burial. One candidate went so far as to call upon the executive.

"Governor," he asked, "have you any objection to my taking Colonel Ward's place?"

"No," replied the governor; "I have no objection if the undertaker is willing."

ONE day, Catherine de' Medici, then the *dauphine*, brought her two young children, the future Francis II and the Queen of Navarre, to their grandfather, Francis I, who was confined to his bed in what proved to be his last illness. One object of the visit was to let them see a large painting of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, by Titian, which had recently arrived from Florence, a present to the French monarch from the Duke of Tuscany, Catherine's father.

This noble work had roused much interest at court, but very few had seen it, for the old king, who was a great lover and patron of art, was greatly pleased with his gift and had caused it to be hung in his bedroom. But the children had heard some of the discussion and had begged to have a look at it. After they had greeted their grandfather, the mother turned to the picture.

"You want to see Adam and Eve, who are our first parents," she said. "Well, there they are."

The children, hand in hand, stood for some time in silence before the masterpiece. Finally, Francis nudged his sister.

"And which of them is Adam?" he whispered.

Little Margot looked a moment longer, then shook her head.

"I can't tell," she replied. "They haven't got their clothes on."

A WESTERNER came on to spend his vacation at Loblolly Cove, near Rockport. He had never seen the ocean before. The first morning of his arrival he appeared at the little fish-house and general store kept by a native named Haskins, and announced that he wanted two pails full of sea-water, which the storekeeper obligingly dipped up for him from his wharf, it being high tide.

"How much?" the Westerner asked.

Haskins, who never overlooked a bargain, replied,

"Ten cents."

The new arrival paid it cheerfully, and that afternoon he turned up again with his pails.

"My doctor out home told me to bathe in sea-water twice a day," he explained; then, observing the distant beach-line at low tide, he added: "Gosh! You've had a big business to-day; haven't you, mister?"

A COLORED couple appeared before a Virginia minister and asked to be married. The man was in a considerably muddled state. The minister said to the woman,

"I won't perform this ceremony."

"Why is dat, boss?" she queried. "Ain't de license all right? An' we is of age."

"Yes; but that man is drunk. Take him away and come back again." Several days later the couple again presented themselves, the man once more obviously intoxicated.

"See here; I told you I wouldn't marry you when this man was drunk," the minister said testily. "Don't you come back here till he's sober."

"Well, you see, suh," the woman replied apologetically, "de trufe is dat he won't come less'n he's lit up."

"THAT young man stays to an unearthly hour every night, Gladys," said an irate father to his youngest daughter. "What does your mother say about it?"

"Well, dad," Gladys replied, as she turned to go up-stairs, "she says that men haven't changed a bit."

A CHINAMAN who had recently arrived from China was desirous of starting a laundry, but was at a loss to know what sort of sign to put over his shop. He therefore decided to take a walk and investigate other signs in order to get an idea.

After walking a while, he came to a restaurant before which appeared the following: "Never Closed." A little farther on he saw another restaurant with this sign: "24-Hour Service." Walking still farther, he came to one reading: "Meals Served Day and Night." Finally, he hung up the following: "Me No Sleep, Too."

BETSY'S grandmother had been reading to her the Bible story of the Creation. When asked by her mother how she liked the Bible so far, she exclaimed:

"Oh, mother, I love it! It is so exciting! You never know what God is going to do next!"

PROFESSOR X: Who's there?

BURGLAR: Lie still and keep quiet. I'm looking for money.

PROFESSOR: Wait; and I'll get up and look with you.

Ƭhey Laughed at My Idea—

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ıey told me it couldn't be done—that it was a "fool ınt." But I made up my mind to try—and I was ıazed to find how easy it was. Almost before I knew [found myself in the big money class.

By WARREN HARTLE

ARTLE, you're all wrong. Take my advice and stay where you are."

"But, listen, Jim—"

"Nothing doing. You can't convince me that can learn how to sell. If you had a Selling personality, if you had the 'gift of gab' it might be different. But ı haven't. I don't want to discourage you, but you ›w yourself that you were never cut out to be a Salesn. You'd just be wasting your time trying to learn. *a fool stunt, that's all.*"

ꟷuch was my running mate's answer when I told him t I intended to learn the Selling game. True, I didn't ›w the first thing about Selling, and it didn't seem if I was cut out for it. Clerking in the railway mail vice *was* far removed from selling goods, and I didn't me Jim for trying to discourage me.

'et I had heard of a new and easy method of learning esmanship that was accomplishing wonders. This amazmethod disclosed the very secrets of Selling that were d by the most successful Salesmen in the country. n who previously knew nothing about Selling were ting results that were actually astonishing.

Vhy, even one of my brother railroad workers, E. C. ler, of Rockford, Ill., who had never sold a thing in his life, was now earning almost $100 a week as a esman. And then there was another fellow—a fireman vho had learned these secrets and was now making ,000 a year! If these fellows could make good, I felt t I could too, so I determined at least to try.

My First Selling Job

rom the day I began to study these wonderful secrets Selling in my spare time, I was filled with new hope— v ambition. It seemed like no time before I had mased them. It was then that I was informed that my first ling job was waiting for me.

While I had always felt that these wonderful secrets uld eventually make a successful Salesman out of me, never dreamed that my success would come so soon. the end of my first week I received a letter from my les Manager congratulating me on my success. I had de a record for my territory!

Each month my sales kept increasing and raises in salary med to follow one on the heels of another.

Into the $10,000 a Year Class

Still, I take no great credit for my sudden rise in the Selling game. What I have done anyone else can do. For instance, there is George Kearns of Oklahoma City. Kearns had never made more than $15 a week. Today he is averaging over $200 a week. Then there is P. W. Broedel of Woodhaven, N. Y., who after six months on the road was making $92 a week.

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:cember 1921

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Volume XLV
Number 6

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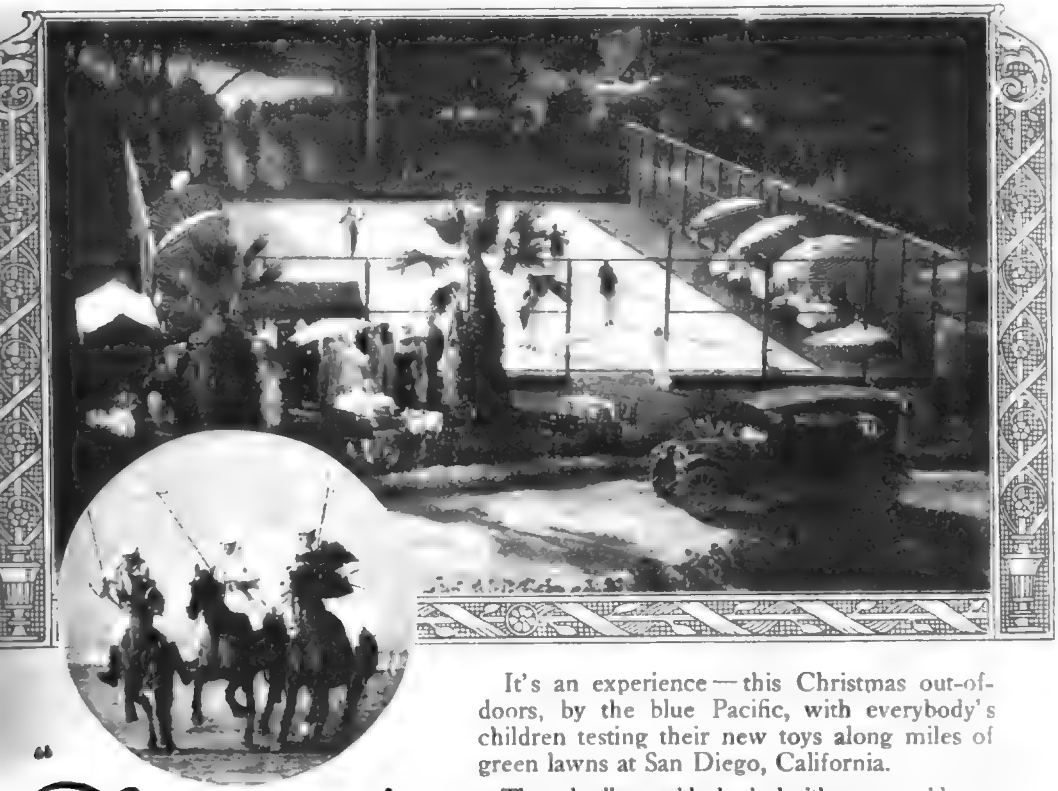

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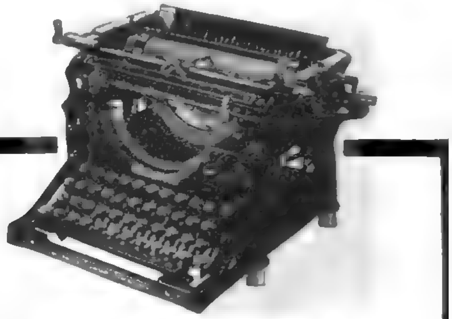

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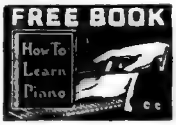

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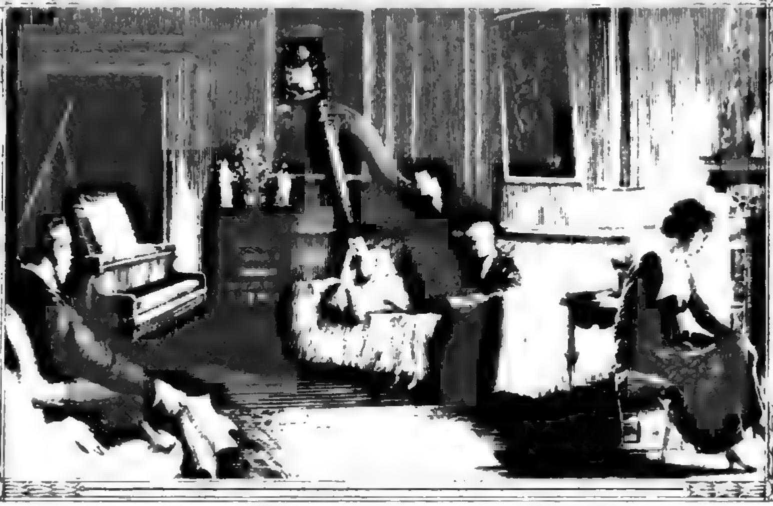

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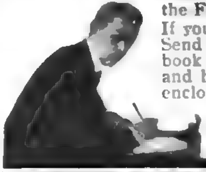

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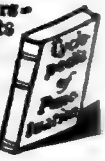

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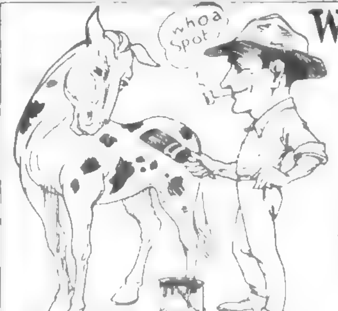

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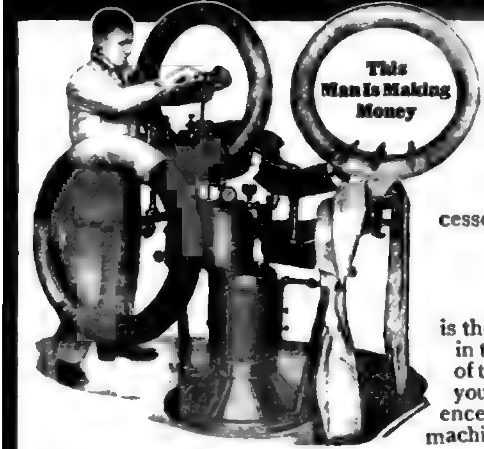
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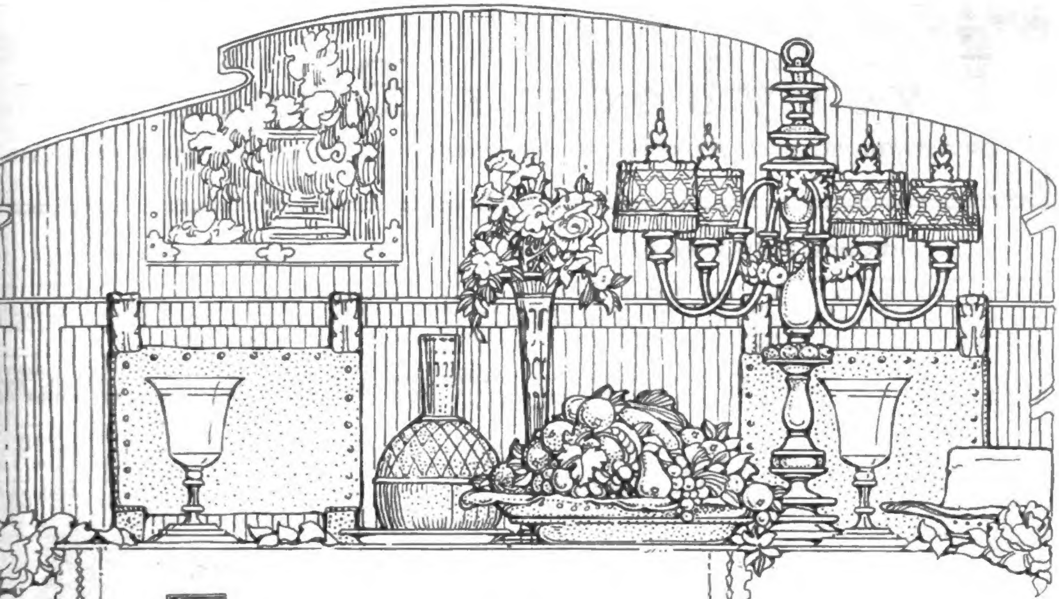

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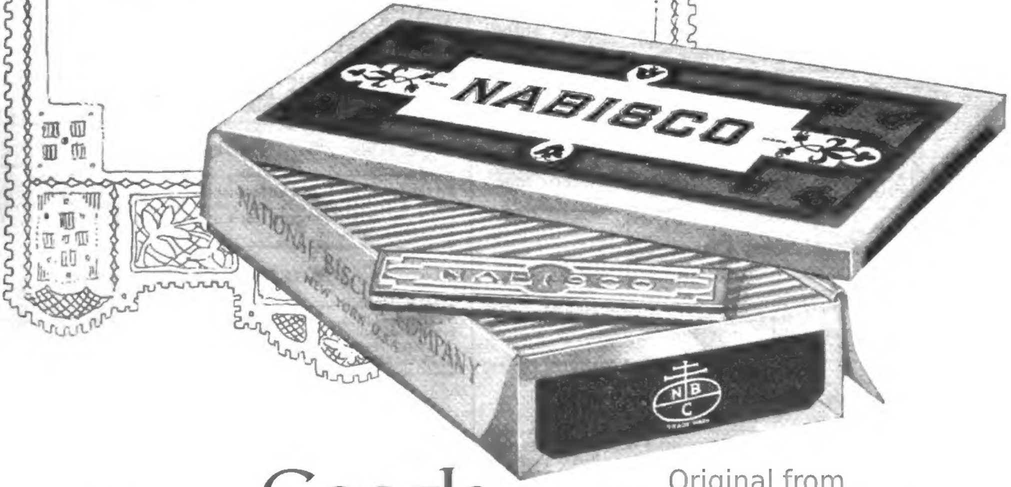
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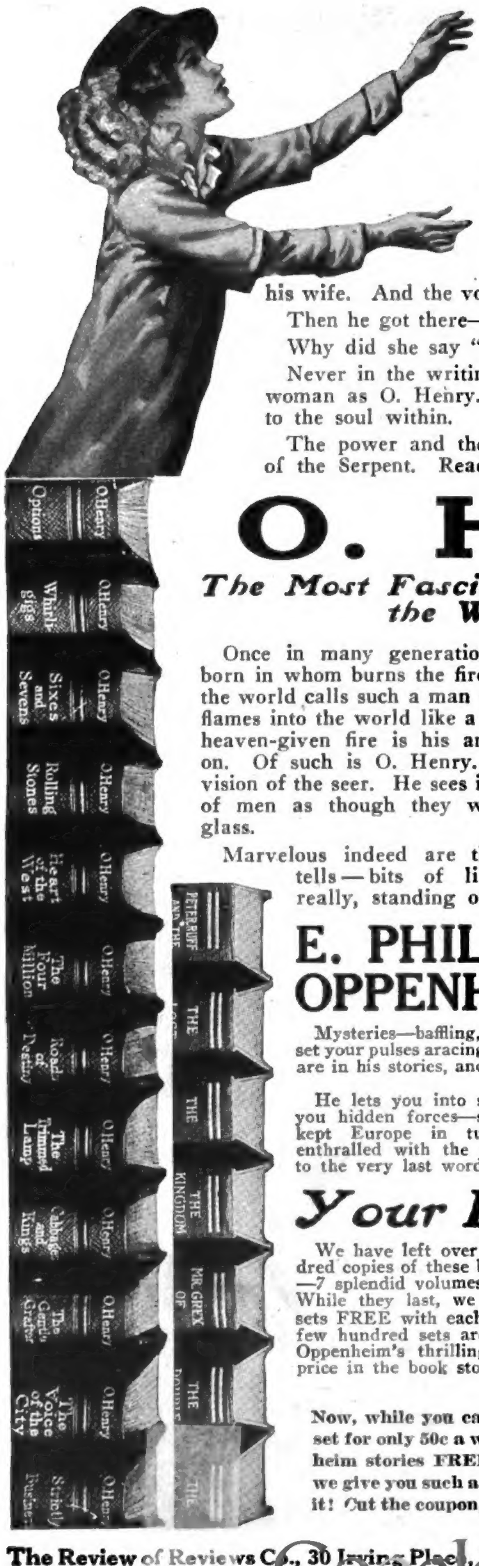

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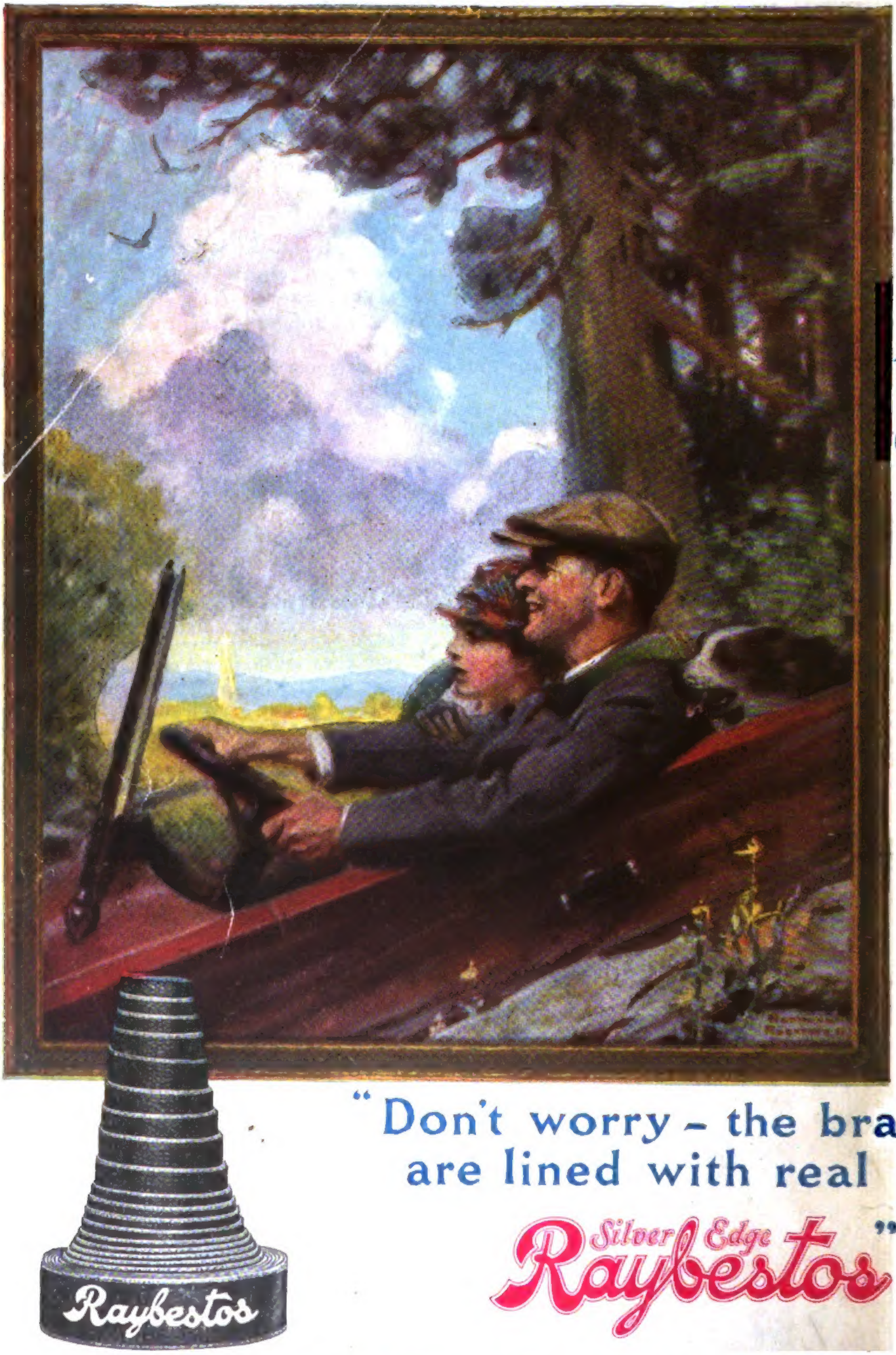

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